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LADY SARAH LENNOX

*By the same author*

ANNE HUTCHINSON, A BIOGRAPHY

LADY SARAH LENNOX

# LADY SARAH LENNOX

AN IRREPRESSIBLE STUART

1745-1826

BY

EDITH ROELKER CURTIS



G . P . P U T N A M ' S S O N S

NEW YORK

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COLONIAL PRESS

CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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TO M. A. DE WOLFE HOWE

luminous critic, and  
percipient friend.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, the author wishes to express her gratitude to the late Richard Walden Hale, who introduced her to the subject of this biography, and who—as he expressed it—presented her with a store of material concerning Lady Sarah Lennox. But for his deep interest in English biography and history this work would not have been undertaken. The abundant results of his researches in the field covered by this book were the main sources of my information. In addition to this tangible material, he gave freely of his interest, scholarship and counsel, in what proved to be a most absorbing and delightful task. It cannot be said that the finished product is a work of collaboration. Indeed we often differed in the interpretation of Lady Sarah's character, and on questions of inclusion and omission. For any errors in these regards, I must, myself, be held accountable. His part in the inception and pursuance of the undertaking should, however, be made known to readers of the book, even as it is realized and appreciated by me.

The writer wishes, also, to acknowledge her indebtedness to the Earl of Ilchester for his courtesy in extending permission to use material from *THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF LADY SARAH LENNOX*, edited by Lady Ilchester and Lord Stavordale (John Murray, London, 1902); and *HENRY FOX, FIRST LORD HOLLAND, HIS FAMILY AND RELATIONS*, by the Earl of Ilchester (John Murray, London, 1920). With one or two exceptions, all quotations from Lady Sarah Lennox's letters have been taken from Lord Ilchester's book. The author would record her gratitude also to Sir John

Murray, publisher, for his kindness and courtesy in all this matter.

Three letters have been taken from THE LETTERS OF GEORGE III TO LORD BUTE, edited by Mr. Romney Sedgwick, Macmillan, London, 1939; and the author wishes to thank editor and publisher for permission to reproduce them here.

Of the several friends who have helped in preparing this book, Mr. John Bovey must be thanked especially for his valuable editorial assistance, and Mr. Richard Walden Hale Jr. for his suggestive criticism of the manuscript.

E. R. C.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Rise of the House of Lennox . . . .	1
II. Childhood . . . . .	21
III. The Foxes and Holland House . . . . .	34
IV. A Royal Suitor . . . . .	47
V. The Royal Courtship . . . . .	77
VI. The Royal Wedding and the Coronation . .	104
VII. Belle of London . . . . .	125
VIII. The Bride . . . . .	137
IX. Paris in the Spring . . . . .	156
X. Gallic Interlude . . . . .	168
XI. The Adored Mistress . . . . .	188
XII. "In This Rudderless State" . . . . .	196
XIII. All for Love . . . . .	209
XIV. The Declassée . . . . .	227
XV. Recovery . . . . .	241
XVI. Fulfillment . . . . .	257
XVII. The Wife of a True Military Man . . . .	280
XVIII. Lengthening Shadows . . . . .	295
XIX. The Mother of Heroes . . . . .	311
XX. The Past Recaptured . . . . .	328
Bibliography . . . . .	336
Index . . . . .	341



## *The Rise of the House of Lennox*

ON OCTOBER ninth, 1671, sobersided John Evelyn recorded in his diary that he had gone that night "with Mr. Treasurer to Euston, a palace of Lord Arlingtons where we found Monsieur Colbert (the French Ambassador) and the famous new French Maid of Honor, Mlle. de Querouaille, now coming to be in great favor with the King." Charles, he reported, "came almost every second day with the Duke, who commonly returned to Newmarket, but the King often lay there." And during Evelyn's visit of nearly a fortnight a rumor even went around the palace that Mlle. de Querouaille "was bedded one of these nights, and the stocking flung after the manner of a married bride." Evelyn indignantly denied that he witnessed this ceremony, but there were other scenes that could escape no one's eyes. "She was for the most part in her undresse all day," he says, "and there was fondnesse and toying with that young wanton."

There was probably little objection on the part of the young wanton. Scenes such as these, which Evelyn records in accents curiously compounded of envy and disapproval, were for her the culmination of a year and a half of intrigue and passion, of schemes thwarted and hopes revived, of angry disappointment and careful calculation. And from them one of the great families of England was to trace its rise—a family which, in a later age and under strangely dif-

ferent conditions, would produce yet another aspirant for royal favor.

Louise de Querouaille was the daughter of a Breton family of ancient if not illustrious lineage. Her father, like many a Breton, was a soldier and a good fellow, her mother a great beauty and a woman of shrewdness akin to that of her daughter. But the daughter had also a streak of wilder impulsiveness. She had, if one may believe the pamphleteers of the period, run off, from her aunt's house in Paris, with the Duke of Beaufort. Disguised as a page, she shared his cabin on a military expedition to Crete, and when her unfortunate lover was blown to bits in the first engagement, she cast herself on the mercy of a shady marquis, under whose "protection" she returned to France. Her aunt had died in the meantime, but the marquis was kind enough to rent for her a beautiful house in Paris. To save the few remaining shreds of her reputation, Louise concocted a dubious but highly dramatic story of ducal abduction, which reached the ears of Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans and sister of King Charles II. Tortured at home by her marriage to the pervert brother of Louis XIV, and bored by the ponderous etiquette of Versailles, Madame was always on the watch for vivacious company. She summoned the Querouaille to come and pay her respects. The girl told her story well, and Henrietta, amused by her ingenuity and resourcefulness, took her at once into her household.

Madame, however, did not occupy herself exclusively with amusement and household intrigue. She was a woman of intelligence; she had something of the robust acumen of her brother Charles, without his indolence, and although she was only twenty-six, she was reputed to be the wittiest woman in France. She was at once the favorite sister of the King of England—Minette, he always called her—and the object of the more than brotherly tenderness of Louis XIV. It was only natural, then, that the Grand Monarch should choose his sister-in-law as a confidential agent to negotiate with Charles

the secret articles of the Treaty of Dover, clauses so shameful that not all the members of the British Cabinet were allowed to know of the execution of a second treaty different from the one given to the world. To the task of cementing a permanent union between the two princes, Madame, through her family position and native wit, was admirably suited.

On April twenty-eighth, 1670, the royal party had set out to accompany Madame to Dunkerque, where she would embark—despite the petulant protests of the effeminate Monsieur—to meet her brother at Dover. Louis had chosen to make the journey a kind of triumphal progress. He was accompanied not only by Madame but by his mistress, Madame de Montespan, the Dauphin, the Grande Mademoiselle, and an enormous retinue. Among the attendants was, of course, the young Mademoiselle de Querouaille.

A royal progress in the seventeenth century was not without its drawbacks. One might maintain all the external splendors of Versailles—with banquets and balls and fireworks and the usual thoughtless dispensation of largess—but nothing could compensate for the boredom which accompanied the long line of carriages as it crawled across the French countryside. The roads were atrocious, and the spring storms of France were oblivious to the prescriptions of Versailles etiquette. The rain might fall in torrents; uniforms would be drenched and plumes bedraggled; the flood waters might sweep away a bridge, and the royal family would have to spend the night huddled together on the floor of a barn. And once Dunkerque was reached, the weather might be unfavorable, or the members of the enormous retinue might be troublesome, or the accommodations aboard the *Royal Charles* might be cramped and uncomfortable.

The young Mlle. de Querouaille must have shown herself more than resourceful throughout the vicissitudes and excitements of the journey. She was quick; she was clever; above all, she possessed an abundance of humor. And she had a



good deal more of finesse than her tender expression and baby face would lead one to expect. She was something more than the ideal maid of honor; she was precisely the sort of girl to attract the susceptible Charles. It is not unlikely that Madame—and even Louis himself—realized her potentialities as a catspaw in the coming negotiations. And probably Louise did not fail to see what was in their minds.

At Dover, however, other matters were more pressing, and even the maneuvers of royal dalliance had to wait on the exigencies of diplomatic negotiation. Monsieur had insisted that Madame conduct her business in the space of three days without being received at Whitehall. Her followers therefore had to content themselves with drab existence in an English fishing village, and they had to sit twiddling their thumbs in the primitive and gloomy discomfort of Dover Castle, until the treaty should be drawn up. The first day passed, and part of the second, and still there was unfinished business. At length, Charles despatched an envoy across the Channel with a request for more time. Apparently Louis was pleased to consent, and the royal command was too much for even the pettish recalcitrance of Monsieur. Madame was able to announce to her followers that their English sojourn had been graciously extended to twelve days; the business of the treaty, which was to bind the interests of England to those of France and to bring the British monarch into the Roman Catholic fold, was concluded; and the town of Dover was filled to overflowing with the members of the British court, who had come down from London to celebrate the King's birthday and the anniversary of the Restoration.

Here, obviously, was Louise's opportunity; she was probably not slow to take advantage of it. There were suppers and balls and yachting parties; there was a great bonfire at Canterbury, with a maypole dance. On all these occasions she could draw tighter and tighter the toils of intrigue which she knew so well how to weave and in which Charles the Second

was always so willing a captive. She must have noticed also the overwhelming and triumphant influence which Madame exerted on her brother; she took special pains, one may be sure, when Charles lounged informally in his sister's apartments to distinguish herself by her diligent care for her mistress. Charles, at any rate, whispered his regard for her, and, according to Bishop Burnet, his whispers did not go unnoticed. For the Duke of Buckingham, remarking the growing tenderness between them, was bold enough to make known his detestation of the King's present mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland; he even intimated that he was not averse to putting Cleveland's nose out of joint by substituting one—and such a charming one—of Madame's ladies.

Inevitably, the King made his request. He would not, he said, accept the jewels which Madame offered him; the only one of her jewels he coveted was Mademoiselle de Querouaille. Would Madame allow her to remain in England as maid of honor to the Queen?

Louise had played her cards well. Had she, perhaps, played them too well? For Madame's answer was as surprising as it was disappointing. She declared firmly that such an arrangement was quite out of the question. Yet Henrietta must have known well enough that her young companion was no flower of purity. It is difficult to believe that she took seriously the fatuities which Louise had concocted to explain her relations with the Duke of Beaufort or that she worried much about returning the Querouaille unsullied to her parents. She must have known, too, how useful Louise could be in spinning the thousand and one threads of intrigue to hold the two courts together.

One can only conclude that the mistress had found the servant so indispensable that she could not bear the thought of doing without her, and that Charles, with his customary indolence, was not inclined for the moment to press the matter. As she stood beside Madame once more on the deck

of the *Royal Charles*, Louise may have told herself that her attendance had been too assiduous—that she had, in fine, overplayed her hand.

Then, in the very height of triumph, just six weeks after the signing of the treaty, Madame died. Modern historians have concluded that she succumbed to acute peritonitis—a malady little understood in those days—but the suddenness of her death gave rise to the suspicion that she had been murdered by some of the dubious characters connected with her worse than dubious husband. And though Louis XIV acted with commendable zeal in investigating the case, Charles' grief and resentment were not entirely allayed, and the relations between the houses of Bourbon and Stuart became for a time somewhat strained. Clearly, there was need for a link between Whitehall and Versailles more intricate and subtle than any contrived by the operations of ordinary diplomacy.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Buckingham, still resentful of the influence of the Duchess of Cleveland, had not forgotten the pliant good nature of Mademoiselle de Querouaille. He intimated to Charles that it was but “a decent piece of tenderness for his sister to take care of some of her servants.” Charles consented, and the Duke hurried across the Channel to persuade Louis that it would be a shrewd move to provide his royal confrère with a French mistress who would be true to the interests of her country. So, in December Louise was brought out of retirement, bundled off to Dieppe—and promptly forgotten by the volatile Duke. The precious package was then turned over to Montagu, the ambassador at Paris, who deposited her on his yacht; and when she arrived at Whitehall, Arlington took charge of her.

The cold-blooded nature of the whole transaction apparently did nothing to discourage Louise. And the endless de-

lays only increased her impatience to be of use. She was no longer the impulsive and irresponsible girl she had been in the spring. She was a mature woman, and she had something greater to satisfy than her vanity; she was the emissary of the French monarchy, and as soon as she arrived at Whitehall she set about proving her worth. Nothing that went forward in the galleries of the palace—the political jobbing, the deliberate flirtations, the calculated bowings and snubbings—escaped her sharp eyes. “She studied to please and observe the King in everything”; her “childish, simple, and baby face” beguiled and amused him; and her efforts, as Evelyn has reported, were soon rewarded.

Gradually she put all her rivals in the shade. In 1672 the King openly declared Louise his new mistress, loaded her with wealth, and made her Duchess of Portsmouth. But that was only the first move in the complicated game she was playing. Too astute to repay the King merely with cloying gratitude, she amused and tormented him by turns and resorted to all the time-honored methods of women to make her lover anxious. “By many fits of sickness, some believed real, and others thought only pretended,” Burnet relates, “she gained of him everything she desired.” Soon the King “divided himself between her and Mistress Gwynn and had no other avowed amour.” And as she gained dominion over him, Louise by imperceptible twists drew tighter and tighter the bonds which engaged him in the French interest, so that at last he began to be thrown into difficulties with his own people.

In 1672 Madame de Sévigné was writing Madame de Grignan that La Querouaille, whose star had been divined before she left France, had fulfilled her destiny faithfully. The King of England had loved her, she had not been disposed to return love with hatred—and now she was eight months with child. Louise’s first and only child, a boy, was born on July twenty-ninth, 1672. The King paid his natural son the

honor of attending his baptism; he gave him the surname of Lennox and his own Christian name.

It was another mistress of Charles the Second who in his presence called her child a bastard, and countered his censure with the soft answer that she would be willing to call him by any title the King might choose to give him. In the case of Louise's son the King was incited to munificence by the action of Louis the Fourteenth. When Charles' nearest relative in Scotland died, the titles and estates of Lennox in Scotland and of Richmond in England had passed to the English crown, but the Stuart lands in Aubigny had reverted to the French monarchy, and there—probably to the no small annoyance of Charles—they remained until 1673. In that year Louis, in recognition of faithful services to France, suddenly bestowed them on the newly created Duchess of Portsmouth, to be inherited at her death by such of her descendants as Charles should designate as his own blood. Louise was able to point out to her royal lover that while she had gained a fortune for her son, his father had done nothing.

But Charles, though he might be inclined to procrastinate, was certainly not ungenerous. When the boy was three, he created him Baron of Settrington and revived for him the titles of Earl of March and Duke of Richmond. He gave him an annuity of two thousand pounds and a substantial royalty of 12d per chaldron on coal dues at Newcastle, which proved so lucrative that his descendants exchanged it in 1799 for an annuity of nineteen thousand pounds. And, finally, he had issued in Scotland letters patent which created the child Duke of Lennox, Earl of Darnley and Baron Methuen of Torbolton. "His Majesty," states Collins' Peerage, "considered with what lustre and glory the House of Lennox had shone in former times and that by the death of Charles Stuart, Duke of Richmond and Lennox, the dignity of the Duke of Lennox was immersed in the crown. Therefore, that the honor might be again revived, his Majesty bestowed the estate of Lennox

on his son, the aforesaid Charles, Duke of Richmond." Thus the fruit of royal passion and diplomatic intrigue was dignified, and the foundations of the great English house of Richmond were laid. Louise de Querouaille, as Madame de Sévigné was quick to see, had not made a single mistake: "She set out to be the King's mistress and she is. Indeed, it is no secret to the Court that he passes all his nights with her. Finally she has had a son who has just been recognized and to whom they have just given two dukedoms."

Other observers, however, viewed the situation with much less equanimity. The stipulations of the Treaty of Dover leaked out; rumors got abroad that Whitehall was taking money from Versailles, and that Popery was casting its shadow once more over the constitutional rights of Englishmen and the Established Church. And finally, when Titus Oates constructed the hideous romance of the "Popish Plot," the English nation went mad with hatred and fear. In the ensuing turmoil—when the trainbands were under arms all night, when the jails were filled with Papists, when no citizen walked abroad without hiding a leaden flail under his coat to brain the Popish assassins—the Duchess of Portsmouth could hardly hope to go unscathed.

Louise was arraigned in pamphlets and satire and court gossip. It was said that she sought to subvert the church and state and to introduce Popery and tyranny into the Three Kingdoms. She was interfering with the natural course of English foreign policy and even with the natural succession to the English crown. She was charged with spreading rumors of a secret marriage to the King and with scheming to place the young Duke of Richmond, as a Catholic monarch, on the English throne. And, finally—a slander which is refuted by her long life and rugged health—she was accused of being a menace to the King's health because she had contracted the "French disease."

Louise's reaction to these fabrications of lies and half

truths was a strange mixture of sensitivity and tasteless insolence. For a "libell called an Essay upon Satyr," in which she was abused for her infidelity and the King was mocked for being both "jilted and sold," she promptly avenged herself on John Dryden, the supposed author. The unfortunate poet (who had not perpetrated the mediocre verses) "was sett upon in Covent Garden in the evening by three fellows, who beat him very severely and on people's coming ran away." On the other hand, Burnet cites a curious incident "to show how far the insolence of a whore can rise." He says that she had struck and sold by the goldsmiths a set of medals, which, not unnaturally, were promptly "called in and were never seen any more." "Her face was on the one side with 'Lucia Duchessa Portsmouthensis' about it; and on the reverse a cupid was sitting on a globe and about him 'Omnia Vincit!'" And she feathered her nest at Whitehall with an ostentation that shocked poor John Evelyn; he admitted that the Duchess was very pretty, but his eye was chiefly engaged by "the rich and splendid furniture of this woman's apartment, now twice or thrice pulled down and rebuilt to satisfie her prodigal and expensive pleasures; whilst Her Majesty's," he remembered jealously, "dos not excede some gentlemen's ladies' in furniture and accommodation." He noted "the new fabriq of French Tapissry, for designe, tenderness of worke and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I had ever beheld. Some pieces had Versailles, St. Germain's, and other palaces of the French King, with huntings, figures, and landskips, exotiq fowls, and all to the life rarely don. Then for Japan cabinets, screenes, pendule clocks, greate vases of wrought plate, tables, stands, chimney furniture, sconces, branches, braseras, &c., all of massive silver, and out of number, besides some of her Majesty's paintings." "What contentment," he concludes sententiously, "can there be in the riches and splendor of this world, if purchased with vice and dishonor?"

Evelyn's language is, despite its somewhat priggish tone, not altogether unjustified. Indeed, one is driven to the conclusion that in some instances the charges of the "libellers" did not go far enough. A suppressed passage in Burnet, for example, suggests that Louis the Fourteenth was shrewd enough to dispense his bounties indirectly and that, to Charles's mortification, Louise held the purse strings. There is reason to suppose that Louise betrayed the King not only in his councils but in his bed; Lord Halifax told Reresby that "she certainly lay with the grand prior of France, who often came over, under the mask of love, to transmit intelligence and information to his master the French King." But even when this intrigue was discovered and the offending prior sent about his business, the King's attachment for Louise seemed only to increase.

To one object Louise was unswervingly devoted; her hand was forever at work pushing the interest of her boy. The young Duke of Richmond was a pretty, well shaped child; he had, as Louise pointed out, "a black complexion" like his royal father's, and his easy, well bred manners and good looks charmed the King. In April, 1681, he was made a Knight and Companion of the Order of the Garter, and His Majesty, together with many of the nobility and other persons of quality, was pleased to honor the ceremony of his son's installment. After the ceremony Louise presented him to the King with his ribbon worn over his left shoulder and the Garter appendant on the right side. Those in attendance were aghast, for the Knights of the Garter always wore the blue ribbon around the neck with the appendant on the breast. But the King was vastly amused. He was "so pleased with the conceit that he commanded all the Knight Companions to wear it the same way." And in December he broke another precedent by making the little Duke the Master of Horse to the King.



Perhaps the strongest indication of Louise's influence occurred when her royal lover lay dying. She was instrumental in persuading the French ambassador and the Duke of York to smuggle into the bedchamber a Roman priest, his tonsured head concealed beneath a wig, who administered extreme unction and gave relief to the tortured conscience of the King. When his natural children were brought to the bedside for his blessing, Charles spoke with special tenderness to the Duke of Richmond. He commended Lady Portsmouth and her son to the care of his brother, the Duke of York, declaring that he had always loved her and that he loved her now to the last. And he besought the Duke, according to Bishop Burnet, "in as melting words as he could fetch out, to be very kind to her and to her son."

When the long agony was over, Louise was prostrate with grief. She may have consoled herself with the knowledge that she had held her lover and served her own country to the last. And she might have found further satisfaction in the realization that her responsibilities were ending at a timely moment. The opposition in Parliament to the French influence had lately risen to a dangerous pitch. Nor were the jealous courtiers at Whitehall inclined to make pleasant her last days in England. James the Second, forgetting the admonitions of his dying brother, insisted that she pay up all her debts. There were even rumors that she had secreted many of the crown jewels, and public opinion required satisfaction on this point before she was allowed to sail for France. Though she managed to make her son the beneficiary of her pension of three thousand pounds, the young Duke of Richmond "was peremptorily turned out from being Master of Horse, and the place conferred on the Lord Dartmouth." The web of influence which Louise had spun so adroitly and so painstakingly was fast unraveling, and there was nothing for her to do but pack up her goods and retire with her son to the French Ambassador's, there to await the return to her

country and the inevitable obscurity which is the lot of the royal mistress whose career is finished.

Henceforth her image becomes dimmer and dimmer, until at last she vanishes into the outer limbo of history. She returned to England in 1685 for a stay of three years, but at the Court of James her influence was the mere shadow of a shadow, and she went back finally to France. She visited Paris at rare intervals, usually to plead with court officials for an increase in her pension, but for the most part she remained at her chateau of La Verrerie in Gien, or in the nearby town of Aubigny. The country bored her, but she managed her funds so badly that she was unable to figure at Versailles, and she relieved her ennui by writing long letters to her son and her grandson. Occasionally there is a glimpse of her in a letter or a document. Even by the light of these fitful lanterns one can trace the lineaments of that charm and perspicacity which had carried her to such heights and which were to emerge once more in her great grand-daughter, Lady Sarah Lennox.

The young Duke of Richmond, who had gone with his mother to France, lived there until February, 1692, when he left Paris suddenly without confiding his intentions to anybody.

Presently there arrived from Switzerland a letter in which the "little milord" requested that Monsieur Barbezieux return to the French King his commission of captain in the cavalry. He explained, with more frankness than tact, that he was going to a country where he would enjoy a higher rank and more revenues than he had had in France, but added that he would always cherish a strong leaning toward that country and a respect for its monarch.

Louise, not unnaturally, was furious. She "could not doubt the stupidity of her son." And to make matters worse, the inconsiderate youth had gone off with her jewels.

From Switzerland he proceeded to England via Germany, and in March joined the Prince of Orange, William the Third of England, who was now comfortably ensconced on the throne once occupied by the Duke's own father. With an eye as usual to the main chance, the Duke threw over his family allegiance, renounced the Roman Catholic faith, and became an Anglican. The patent created in his father's time, which had settled upon him a revenue from exported coal amounting to four or five thousand pounds a year, now took effect. And the Duke's conversion, together with his easy good manners, won him the favor of William; for, according to Luttrell, soon after his arrival he "carried the sword before the King and Queen to Chappell and waited next the King's chair at dinner."

But despite his winning manners the Duke of Richmond, like many an only child, was badly spoiled. He might serve as aide de camp to the King or take his seat in the House of Lords or assume the titles of Admiral of Scotland, governor of Dumbarton Castle, and the like; he might even carry the scepter and dove at Queen Anne's coronation and be made Lord of the Bedchamber. Yet his honors remained largely titular, and he seems to have been trusted by no one. Like his grandmother, Henrietta Maria, the Queen of Charles I, he was addicted to unprincipled scheming and was even suspected of being a Jacobite in 1696. Dean Swift, that terrible and unswerving judge of human frailty, declared that he was nothing but a shallow coxcomb.

In 1693 the Duke married Anne Brudenell, the widow of Lord Bellasis, although neither William the Third nor the Duchess of Portsmouth approved of the marriage. But in 1698 Louise crossed the Channel to visit her son's menage in Sussex and to acknowledge, by a brief reappearance in England, the pension of a thousand pounds which Parliament had just voted her. And three years later the bond between her and her daughter-in-law was strengthened by the birth

of a grandson, who was to be the Second Duke of Richmond and the father of Lady Sarah Lennox.

From childhood the Second Duke of Richmond displayed so much more amiability and strength of character than his father that one is tempted to believe that the Brudenells had brought a new vitality to the House of Lennox. Strength, at any rate, Anne Brudenell's family possessed, even if they did not always exercise it in a noble cause. Her aunt, Lady Shrewsbury, so they said, had disguised herself as a page and held the horse of the Duke of Buckingham while he killed her husband in a duel, and had then gone to bed with her lover before the blood had been wiped off. But a later descendant, George Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, covered himself and his house with glory when he led the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

Lord March, as the Second Duke was styled during his father's lifetime, grew so rapidly that he was "one of the tallest youths that ever was seen at his age." His mother thought that this made him "excessively weak in his limbs"—a defect which she hoped would mend when he had "done growing and begun to spread." Pouring out her "thousand dreadful fears" to her mother-in-law, Anne implored Louise to help her to persuade the Duke "to promise his son shall not this year or two venture any more riding what ye sportsmen call fine hunters." The young Earl—whom his mother called "rattle headed"—had suffered a bad fall, and she insisted that it would be a great pity to allow him to go out with the hounds in future, since "his life upon those horses would be in the greatest of dangers." Hunting, in her opinion, was no necessity to a fine gentleman; might it not, in fact, cause the young Duke to neglect his books and learning?

Such an objection was not likely to weigh very heavily with the Duchess of Portsmouth, and, indeed, the Second Duke of Richmond remained a devotee of fox-hunting almost to the day of his death. His mother's protests are of interest

rather in their suggestion of a warm and unexpected intimacy between Anne and her mother-in-law. Louise was never well treated by her son, and she had not approved his marriage. But this proof that she enjoyed the confidence of her daughter-in-law shows that even in old age she retained her *flair* for human relationships.

Within a year or so the overgrown "rattle head" became a handsome youth, who impressed everyone he encountered with the grandeur of his manners and the generosity of his spirit. People said that there was a certain "innate magnificence" about Lord March that seemed to make him noble in more than birth; he seemed almost to embody a magnanimity of the classic stamp.

It was the custom in those days for parents to arrange extremely youthful alliances for their children. Fortunately for the House of Lennox, the bride chosen for the Earl of March came of vigorous English stock on her father's side and sober Dutch on her mother's. Lady Sarah Cadogan was the daughter of William, Earl of Cadogan, that "burly Irish giant" who enjoyed the confidence of the great Marlborough himself, and who is known to posterity by the bobbed wig to which he gave his name. Her mother was a daughter of William Munster, Counselor of the Courts of Holland.

Here again the First Duke of Richmond showed his unprincipled hand. He was marrying his son far beneath his rank, and the alliance was arranged to cancel the debts of a gambling bout in which the Duke had been rooked by the Earl of Cadogan. The Duke was forced to make out a receipt for five thousand pounds, "being part of the twenty-thousand pounds given by the said Earl as a Marriage Portion in present with his daughter, Lady Sarah, to my son Charles, Earl of March."

When the terms of this sordid transaction had been signed and sealed to everyone's satisfaction, the eighteen-year-old Earl was snatched out of school and despatched to the

Hague; and the little girl of thirteen was brought out of the nursery to meet him. The two had scarcely exchanged a glance before they were told that they must become man and wife on the instant. The little girl uttered not a word, but the youthful milord's reaction—according to his grandson, Henry Napier—was candid and to the point. "They surely," he exclaimed, "are not going to marry me to that dowdy!"

His protest availed him nothing. A clergyman was in attendance, and the ceremony was begun at once. As soon as it was over Lord March climbed into a post chaise that stood waiting at the door and started off with his tutor to make the Grand Tour. His wife was returned to her mother.

But all this huggermugger had an unexpected and romantic denouement. When Lord March returned from the continent three years later, handsomer and more attractive than ever, he was glad to get back to England. "But," adds Henry Napier, "he had no very agreeable recollections of his wife." So instead of going directly to his own home, he determined to enjoy himself for one more evening at the opera. While he was amusing himself between the acts in examining the company, his eye was caught by the extraordinary beauty of one of the young women. He turned to a bystander and asked who she was. His interlocutor was amazed. "You must be a stranger in London," he replied, "not to know the toast of the town—the beautiful Lady March." Lord March lost no more time. He went directly to the box, announced himself, and claimed as his bride the "dowdy" he had so scornfully rejected three years before. From that moment on, they became the most conspicuously devoted couple in London.

In March, 1723, their first child, Lady Caroline Georgina Lennox, was born. And in the early summer the First Duke of Richmond died, and his son acceded to the title.

Upon his father's death he received from his grandmother a note tender and altogether touching. Writing from Au-

bigny in June, Louise told her grandson that she felt the grief of a devoted mother, although she had suffered much from her son's unresponsive nature. She looked forward to finding consolation in her grandson, "of whom I have always every reason to be satisfied." And she flattered herself that her grandson had a certain affection for her, too. "I shall not consider myself so unhappy, my dear Lord," she concluded, "if you are just a little bit sensible of it."

His Grace was not to see his grandmother until five years later, when he visited her at Aubigny. Although she had then attained more than fourscore, he reported that in "humor, figure, spirits, memory, and everything, she still has the appearance of a woman under fifty." But though Louise proved to be flourishing like the proverbial green bay tree, she was in fact dissipating her fortune in gambling and extravagance. In 1723 she petitioned the Controleur General for an increase in her pension. Her rents, she claimed, had been drastically reduced, but it is more likely that her expenditures had increased and that she was being pressed by creditors. From her youth she had been a spendthrift, and to the end of her days she relied on her insight in judging and handling people to make her affairs roll.

Her insight was in some measure indicated by her high estimate of her grandson. Everyone, from his King and fellow peers to his youngest child, had reason to be satisfied with him. "He was," says William Playfair, "so worthy a nobleman that he never lost a friend or created an enemy, even when political rage seemed to animate every breast." Though he cherished a great pride in his bastard descent from Charles the Second, he was in reality a Stuart of a more generous and manly type than his grandfather. In him, and in his children after him, the traits that distinguished the Lennoxes became clearly defined. He did nothing momentous for England, but he served his King with unswerving loyalty. He went frequently on political missions and he was

much admired in all the courts of Europe. For the Second Duke of Richmond was a man of magnanimity rather than brilliance, and his honors, unlike those of his father, seemed the natural ornaments of aristocratic character rather than the tinsel decorations of the timeserver.

On June twenty-sixth, 1726, he was installed at Windsor, with customary pomp, as Knight Companion of the Order of the Garter. In September he was appointed a Lord of the Bedchamber to His Majesty, a position which he retained after the accession of George the Second in the following year. And he officiated as Constable of the Coronation.

When Her Grace the Duchess of Portsmouth finally died on November fourth, 1734, the Duke of Richmond succeeded to the Dukedom of Aubigny in France and entered the peerage of that kingdom. Nor did this increase in the wealth and position of the Stuarts abroad go unnoticed among the Hanoverians at home. In January the Duke regained the honor which on the death of Charles the Second had been snatched from his father; he "was appointed Master of Horse to His Majesty and the next day sworn of his most honorable Privy Council." For England was settling down to the peaceful, and corrupt, ways of Hanoverian rule. And George the Second was more disposed to recognize the loyalties of the moment—especially if they were accompanied by affluence—than to stir the dying embers of Jacobite dissension.

Meanwhile the Duke remained passionately devoted to his wife. Even her extraordinary fertility—she is said to have been with child twenty-seven times—could not dim the luster of her beauty. The very year before she died Horace Walpole found her complexion still "as fair and blooming as when she was a bride." And Walpole never tired of extolling the love of the Duke and Duchess. After seeing them at a ball in November, 1741, he wrote to Horace Mann in Florence: "The beauties were the Duke of Richmond's two daughters, and their mother still handsomer than they. The Duke sat by



his wife all night kissing her hand; how this must sound in the ears of Florentine's *cicisbe's* cock or hen!" No doubt the gossiping bachelor was surprised that the grandson of Charles the Second and Louise de Querouaille could be so devoted a husband, for a few months later, after seeing them at the Duchess of Norfolk's masquerade, he was exclaiming again: "The two finest and most charming of the masks were their Graces of Richmond, like Henry the Eighth and Jane Seymour—excessively rich and both so handsome."

For her part, the Duchess, as Walpole remarked, "took care that the House of Richmond should not be extinguished." By 1743 she had borne ten children, of whom five survived: Lady Caroline Georgina (1723), Lady Emilia (1731), Charles, first styled Earl of March (1735), Lord George Henry Lennox (1737), and Lady Louisa Augusta (1743). To these was presently added another, whose gifts, attainments, and history were in many ways the most remarkable that the House of Lennox had produced.

## II

### *Childhood*

LADY SARAH LENNOX was born in Richmond House, London, on St. Valentine's Day, "Old Style" in the year 1744—a presage for those who believe in omens. The Duke and Duchess were devoted to their children as well as to each other, and Sarah's childish consciousness expanded in an atmosphere of luxurious security and tender parental affection. The family life of the Lennoxes seems to have been spontaneous and natural, with little of the frigid formality customary among fashionable families of the day. Louisa and Sarah, the two youngest until the birth of a delicate sister, Cecilia, were petted and made much of by the entire family. Louisa was demure, with the placid, grave dignity of her mother and Dutch grandmother. Sarah was a romp, with pink cheeks and laughing eyes. She had a high-spirited, vivacious way of investigating anything and anybody that excited her curiosity.

As their father was then one of the Lords of the Bedchamber to George the Second, the two were often taken to Kensington Gardens by their French governess. One day they found a group of fashionables gathered along the Broad Walk waiting to see the royal family promenade. The little girls begged to watch the procession. The governess managed to thrust them to the front rank, hurriedly whispering instructions concerning deportment in the presence of

royalty. They were to curtsy when she nudged them, spreading their quilted petticoats and panniered gowns in the way they had been taught by their French dancing master. Above all, they must not stare or ask questions or point as the King drew near. Seven-year-old Louisa nodded and fingered her gown obediently, but Sarah, who was two years younger, fidgeted with impatience.

At last several tall footmen bearing gold canes appeared, followed by pages in silken hose and slashed doublets. Came the equerries in resplendent uniform, and finally a group of ladies in waiting and gentlemen of the court.

To Sarah the procession of courtiers must have seemed endless. At last the bystanders up the line were bowing and curtsying, and one knew that the King was coming. Standing on tip toe, and craning her neck, the little girl caught a glimpse of a stout little gentleman with a very red face strutting along like a turkey cock. She stared at him fascinated, and then, just when those near her were making obeisance, she broke away from her sister and her astonished governess and bounded up to His Majesty.

*"Comment vous portez vous, Monsieur le Roi?"* she asked, for she spoke nothing but French. *"Vous avez une grande et belle maison ici, n'est ce pas?"*

The King stopped and stared at her. It was a trying moment for everyone. His Majesty had grown even redder in the face, and he was making guttural noises as if about to explode into one of his tantrums. Suddenly, Sarah remembered her instructions. She curtsied to him so prettily that he guffawed and asked who she was. The frightened governess stammered, "The Honorable Lady Sarah Lennox, daughter to Their Graces, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond." The King then declared that her naïveté was delightful, and requested that she be brought to see him some morning at the palace.

Sarah's first visit was a success, and she was taken again

and again. The little girl's gay confidence in the world as she knew it tickled the irascible old Hanoverian, who often shouted at his courtiers and even kicked them when annoyed. He was always in a good humor when Sarah appeared. She often found him "counting out his money, which he received regularly every Monday morning." Money was a very serious matter to George the Second, but he always left off counting it to play with his little friend—a charming sequel to the familiar nursery rhyme.

His pranks were not always kind. One morning after a romp the King suddenly snatched Sarah up and deposited her in a large china jar and shut down the cover. Instead of screaming in terror to be let out, as many children would, Sarah, nothing daunted, began to sing "*Malbruc s'en va t'en guerre.*"

Her spirit delighted the King, and he soon took her out. Perhaps he rewarded her with a comfit or a tune from the musical clock that she liked to play. His touch was not always so heavy handed, for Sarah all her life recalled their games with pleasure; and the King long cherished a fondness for his small playmate. Indeed, George the Second's fancy for her as a child later led to the most romantic episode of Sarah's girlhood.

After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, which ended the War of the Austrian Succession, the Duke of Richmond was appointed Ambassador to the Court of France. He conducted with so much tact his mission to the country with which England had lately been at war, that his duchy of Aubigny was restored to him. To show his appreciation, the Duke took his Duchess to pay their respects to the French court the following year; and the two little girls, Louisa and Sarah, went with their parents. No doubt the children enjoyed the bustle and pomp of the extensive cortege, for when the first ranking duke in the realm went abroad he traveled in state. On this journey the Duke of Richmond was

accompanied by an English, a French, and a private secretary; a Gentleman of the Horse; four pages; a *maître d'hôtel*, a *rôtisseur*, a *pâtissier*, and an establishment of some fifty retainers and fifty-two horses. As they bowled across the fair land of France, little Lady Sarah must have peered from her coach window and distracted her elders with her prattle—as any other bright youngster.

She was already beginning to amuse her elders by her pertinent questions. For, a few months later she asked her mother when her father went out with the hounds from Goodwood on a bad, rainy day, "Is papa obliged to go out hunting? Or is it because he wants to?"

In 1749 the Duke had a new vault dug in Chichester Cathedral for the body of his father, which he had removed from Westminster Abbey, and for his own tomb. His health was failing, and he must have known that he was about to die. He must have suspected also that his loving wife would not survive him long, for he made a last will and testament containing careful provision for the upbringing of his unmarried daughters. He appointed the Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Albemarle and Lord Cadogan (the two last named were both his brothers-in-law), the Earl of Kildare, and Henry Fox (his two sons-in-law), and the family lawyer, Thomas Hill of the Parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and their survivors to be the guardians of his little girls, "earnestly recommending it to them to leave the entire education of Lady Louisa and Lady Sarah, my daughters . . . to their sister, Lady Kildare, she being allowed sufficient out of their respective fortunes for this purpose."

There was, of course, more than sufficient. After the Duke's death in 1750—which occasioned such general grief that it was asserted that "His Majesty, the nation, his friends" had lost what was "not to be repaired"—Lady Sarah and the other minor children were amply, if not lavishly provided for. Probably each of the girls had a fortune of five hundred

pounds a year, capitalized at five per cent, or a dot of ten thousand pounds. This sum represented a greater fortune then than it does today, for money went further in the eighteenth century. Unless the suitor sought a vast fortune, Sarah and her sisters, as heiresses of such affluence and as Duke's daughters with courtesy titles, would be suitable matches for any rank.

After her husband's death, the Duchess of Richmond also made a last will and testament. She, too, commended the education of her unmarried daughters to Lady Kildare, but she expressed a wish that Louisa and Cecilia, when they reached the age of fifteen, and Sarah when she was fourteen, should be removed from Ireland to the care of her other married daughter, Lady Caroline Georgina Fox.

Why did both the Duke and the Duchess postpone their eldest daughter's guardianship of their children? Lady Caroline Fox was eight years older than Lady Emily Kildare, and admirably situated to chaperone her orphaned sisters. Why, then, was she relegated to the role of second fiddle? Because neither parent could quite forget Caroline's youthful affront to their authority—"the outrage" of her elopement and marriage to Henry Fox. Although the Duke and Duchess had become reconciled with their eldest daughter and her husband upon the birth of their first grandson, Stephen, in 1748, the terms of both their wills indicate that they still distrusted Caroline's views on the duty of young girls toward their guardians, and still disliked her husband's lineage.

The kindly Henry Fox had invited the grief-stricken Duchess and her children to Holland House immediately after the Duke's death. Probably Caroline persuaded her mother during this visit that Ireland was all very well for girls who had not yet reached the marriageable age, but that London was obviously the best marriage market. No one could deny that her own *mésalliance* had turned out a worldly success. In any case, the Duchess modified her opinion concerning

Caroline's suitability as a chaperone by adding an amiable proviso to her will.

Without her Duke the Duchess pined; and her final illness was thought "to be greatly occasion'd" by a fright brought on by little Sarah. The impulsive child thrust her hand through a glass bird cage and cut an artery. Sarah would certainly have bled to death "had not the Duchess very luckily remembered a story in ye newspaper by which she found a very effectual way of stopping ye great effusion of blood, and by that means saved her life." Whatever the cause, the Duchess died soon afterward, in August 1751.

The three little sisters were sent immediately to Ireland to live with the Kildares, as their parents had planned. As Louisa was eight, Sarah six, and Cecilia only a tot, the first years of their Irish sojourn were passed in the nursery.

Lady Emily Kildare was twenty when she took charge of them, but she had been married four years. Her wedding, described by Lady Shaftesbury as "most magnificent," had taken place in her father's house in Whitehall Place, Westminster, on the seventh of February, 1747. The young matron was as comely as other members of her family, with a sweetness of expression that Reynolds had despaired of catching when he painted her portrait. The little girls were indeed fortunate, for Emily's marriage—like that of their parents—was filled with happiness. As she herself said, she was "married to the person in the world I love best, and who is the best and kindest of husbands." She was not the only person who liked him. James, twentieth Earl of Kildare, was the most popular man in all Ireland.

Although Kildare's interest in politics took him often to Dublin, the children probably spent the greater part of the year at Carton, the Earl's magnificent country seat in County Kildare in the Province of Leinster. There the girls were brought up to enjoy the sports and pleasures of country life. Since riding to hounds was first among the sports in Ireland,

one pictures some weather-beaten and trustworthy Irish groom teaching Sarah at a very early age to "sit tight and feel the baste's mouth." In any case, she grew up an enthusiastic and accomplished horsewoman.

Sarah and her sisters also acquired such education and accomplishments as were suitable for young ladies of their rank; and Emily contributed a liberality of outlook most unusual in the wife of an earl and the daughter of a duke. For Lady Kildare was "a dabbler in philosophy"; she had even taken up with the new notions of M. Jean Jacques Rousseau. Mrs. Delany, the niece of Lord Lansdowne, says that Lady Kildare became so interested in Rousseau that during his visit to England in 1766 she actually offered him a retreat in return for educating her children. Nothing came of her impulse, which may have sprung from her natural goodness of heart or from a genuine sympathy with the fascinating pedagogical principles set forth in *Émile*. But it is significant that Emily's son, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, died a martyr to his republican convictions, and that Lady Sarah Lennox was never swept off her feet in the presence of royalty—even when a king talked of making her his queen.

Presently Louisa and Sarah emerged from the nursery and began to go about in Dublin under Lady Kildare's wing. Emily was now a young matron in her twenties, with more social experience than is usual among young married women today. For, according to Horace Walpole, she had attended her first London ball at the age of ten. Furthermore, she now held a great position; the Earl was carrying on the tradition of his fathers as leader in the Irish Patriot Party.

In 1753 Kildare had presented a memorial to the King protesting against the claim by the ministry of the right to dispose of the annual surplus in the Irish Exchequer. In combating this claim the Earl was eminently successful; and two years later he had been made a Lord Justice, one of the three men who carried on the Irish Government when the



Houses were not in session, and in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant. His appointment was a concession to the Patriot Party calculated to bring even its most discontented members into harmony with the English Government; and as such it was successful, for organized resistance ceased until 1757. Then new differences arose because George Stone, the Primate, and Henry Boyle, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, united their parties against that of Kildare. The Earl declined to compromise with men whom he held in contempt. The duties of a Lord Justice were not "wonderfully tempting," he said, and for his part he was "content to stand down," even if his action should end his political career.

Such was the moral fiber of the man who acted more as a father than a guardian to Sarah during her most impressionable years. So great was his popularity as Lord Justice that crowds thronged the roadways when he rode about in his coach; and although he withdrew from office just as Sarah entered Dublin society, his retirement was temporary, and Kildare House continued to be the center of the Patriot Party.

This magnificent mansion—which Dubliners pronounced "the most stately private edifice in the city"—had recently been completed when the three little Lennox girls went to Ireland. There was no land for sale on St. Jermyn Street when the Earl had looked about for a site in 1744, and he determined to live in an "unconfined" district. But when he announced his intention of building on Molesworth Fields his friends shrugged and intimated that he would be too far removed from the run of fashion. "Fashion will follow me," the Earl replied—and it did, as the stately houses on Merrion Street and the detached mansions round "the Green" still bear witness.

Kildare was equally happy in his choice of an architect. Richard Castle (or Cassels) created a rectangular Palladian house that has been the pride of Dubliners for generations,

and is now the seat of the Dail Eireann. Lady Sarah was born to magnificence, and she probably took the splendor of her sister's new house for granted. But visitors, passing through the handsome gate that opened on the great courtyard bounded by high walls, were impressed by the commanding western facade with its beautiful Doric colonnades. The grandeur of the lofty, two-story hall in the Palladian manner, the State Dining Room, the Supper Room adorned with sixteen fluted Ionic columns, fulfilled even the most exacting expectations; and the long Picture Gallery above, hung with paintings by the "first Masters" beneath an arched ceiling after designs by Wyatt surpassed anticipations. The living apartments on the second floor were, of course, inaccessible to all but the intimate friends of the family; but here, too, the decoration was lavish, and the rooms were "enriched with superb gildings and elegantly furnished with white damask." Indeed, Leinster House—as the mansion has been called since the Earl of Kildare's elevation to the Dukedom of Leinster in 1766—was sufficiently palatial to satisfy the aspiration of the most ambitious debutante imaginable. But as she tripped down the concealed staircase to her first party, Sarah was undoubtedly thinking more about the people she was about to meet than whether the great rooms offered an impressive background for her debut. She was probably hoping that she looked her best, and that her intimates would take pity on her shyness and encourage her. As for the rest, she knew she was meeting the cream of society, because Kildare House was the center of both political and social life in Dublin.

Fate, which was always kind to her, now offered her almost every advantage to be found in a European capital. In the middle of the eighteenth century Irish society astonished English visitors, accustomed to the heavy-handed parsimony of the Hanoverian dispensations, by its sumptuous gaiety. For one thing, there seemed to be plenty of money; every table

bore a profusion of dishes and an abundance of wines; servants were so numerous they got in one another's way. At Carton and Kildare House, Lady Emily appeared "in sack and diamonds in an afternoon." French horns played at every meal, and there were such quantities of plate and cutlery that visitors imagined themselves in a palace. And there was in Irish circles an easy spontaneity that was lacking in the stiffer etiquette of London. Dublin gatherings, at which politicians, soldiers, divines, and lawyers all rubbed shoulders with the great, were as brilliant and polished as those in Paris; and they were conducted with a conviviality that could not be equaled in the French capital. At the balls and *ridottos* the witty, the gifted, and the titled met and conversed as if they really liked to. The result, as Walpole noted in 1757, was that "all Ireland is become the staple of wit . . . and coins *bons mots* for our greatest men."

Although the Kildares lived in splendor, the tone of their gatherings was one of state rather than ostentatious display; the assemblages were in many respects as restrained as any humble tenant could wish. As befitted a man with the cares of state on his shoulders, the Earl frowned on the twin vices of his countrymen, drunkenness and gambling. After the sumptuous repasts, the ladies sat and worked, and the gentlemen "lolloped about." Every morning the Earl's chaplain, who lived in the house, read prayers. The ladies always made a show of attending very devoutly; the gentlemen were sometimes less respectful. In church on Sunday the Kildares occupied "a comfortable gallery with a good fire," and after the service they drove about the county in a coach and six visiting their friends.

Carriage exercise was a feature of Irish life. It was the fashion for the smart young matrons to exercise their ponies on the North Country Road in the morning. No doubt Sarah drove out often with Emily, and learned to handle the ribbons herself. The task of the accomplished lady whip could

be quite exciting, as it was not unusual for a woman to manage six ponies at once. This feat would seem to demand too much concentration to permit any flirting—yet the road was a rendezvous for gallantry in the forenoon when the dashing young Irishmen were wont to refresh themselves, after a duel or a gambling bout, with a jog on a fine horse and a look at a pretty face. The afternoon parade was formal. Then, one could count as many as three or four coaches of six, and at least eight or ten of four, passing to and fro among the long procession of vehicles on the North Country Road; and even the bourgeoisie hired the smartest equipages their credit could muster to display their womenfolk, decked out in “gaudy frippery” from France. In the late afternoon, when the road became a thoroughfare for those who liked to proceed at a sedate and orderly pace, the dashing young Irishmen were replaced by a file of elderly riders on sober park hackneys who turned out in “toppers” to take their daily exercise and view the *beau monde*.

While Sarah was growing up in a conventional, stately environment, with plenty of fun and good company, Dubliners played and amused themselves in a burst of happy extravagance. Rents were substantial and labor was cheap. The landed gentry felt themselves to be secure and well to do. In consequence the entertainments were varied and incessant. One could, if one chose, go to “the Castle” to a function of the Lord Lieutenant twice a week, to the opera twice a week, and to the plays, concerts, assemblies and suppers which filled up the remaining time. Masquerades, balls, and card parties were held at the Rotunda Gardens and Assembly Rooms—they were an Irish imitation of Vauxhall and Ranelagh combined which had recently been opened in support of the Lying-in Hospital. Lady Emily undoubtedly exercised discrimination in choosing entertainments suitable for her wards; but concerts, the theater, and the opera were all a part of a well brought up young lady’s education. In the

spring and early summer one went to the Gardens to hear the orchestra that played on the terrace. Between numbers one bowled on the green, or nibbled light refreshments and gossiped. No doubt Sarah found these informal occasions refreshing after the endless introductions into stately drawing rooms filled with critical elders.

One's bearing in society, it seemed, was so important! A dignified deportment enabled one to catch a desirable husband—and it was the custom to push girls into marriage in their early teens. Sarah, tall, with long limbs and a lovely, well-rounded figure, was testing her power to attract men, at an age when our modern fillies are still romping round a hockey field in shorts and sneakers. Already Louisa, not yet fifteen, had had several proposals; and everyone was greatly pleased when she accepted the Right Honorable Thomas Conolly of Castletown. But Sarah must have been secretly disappointed, because Louisa's marriage would shortly compel her to go to England alone, and in the meantime she had no intimate companion of her own age.

At times she perhaps longed for an opportunity to go on with her acting. Undoubtedly she had had an opportunity to show her talent, because all the fashionable schools in Dublin were continuously putting on plays and competing with one another; and the parents attended the performances and criticized the acting quite as if histrionic ability were a necessary requirement of a polished education. The fact was that the elder Sheridan had suddenly made the theater fashionable for amateurs as well as professionals. After a year's absence in England, Sheridan had returned to Dublin intent on curing Irish audiences of their bad habit of mounting the stage during a performance and pestering the players. He broke the custom by amusing them so well that in October, 1758, when Sarah was thirteen, he was opening a new and larger theater in Crow Street.

That excellent society reporter, Mrs. Delany, drove some

ten miles from her house in Delville to see this new playhouse in Dublin, and to watch Mrs. Fitzhenry perform the part of Zara in *The Mourning Bride*. Mrs. Delany pronounced Mrs. Fitzhenry's interpretation of her role "incomparable," and reported that the new playhouse was both handsome and well lighted. "And there," she adds, as if it were the climax of a delightful evening, "I saw Lady Kildare and her two blooming sisters, Lady Louisa Conolly (the bride) and Lady Sarah Lennox, who I think the prettiest of the two."

Mrs. Delany was an excellent judge. Sarah was often rated the beauty of her generation. But Mrs. Delany did not perceive—and certainly Sarah herself had no idea of it—that Ireland was capping her beauty with a more subtle charm. Sarah learned the rudiments of coquetry beneath the fluted columns of the supper room in Kildare House; she learned to avoid and yet catch the stares of the gallants as she made herself into an "elegant burden" in a sedan chair to be carried past Daly's club rooms; but, as she drove along the North Country Road, or triumphed in theatricals at school, she was far too young to understand that she was being inoculated with a certain Celtic spontaneity and insouciance. Like most girls in their middle teens, she was not at all sure of herself when she crossed the Irish Channel to live at Holland House with her sister Caroline. Her success in Ireland had not been conspicuous. How could she guess that she had acquired a bearing that would make her at once the despair and the delight of the gallants in London?

## II

### *The Foxes and Holland House*

IN NOVEMBER, 1759, Sarah's stay in Ireland came to an end, and she was brought over to England to live with the Foxes at Holland House. Now that Louisa was married to the Right Honorable Thomas Conolly and settled at Castle-town, Sarah had to set out on her journey alone—except, of course, for the inevitable chaperone. One pictures her waving a tearful good-by to the coast of Ireland from the packet boat, and then eagerly scanning the horizon a few hours later for the English shore. For although the parting from her closest sister must have been painful, Louisa's marriage had already separated them, and Sarah's removal from Ireland to London and the environs of the Court offered an opportune and delightful graduation into the great world.

Henry Fox, her new guardian, was of a breed very different from that of the dignified and patriotic Earl of Kildare. The Duke of Richmond had objected to him as a son-in-law on the ground that he was "the son of a footman." And in this snobbish accusation there was just a grain of truth. Stephen Fox, his father, the founder of the family, had been little better than a glorified groomsmen to Charles the Second in exile. He owed his rise to financial acumen and a happy faculty for being present at the right moment. He discharged "various financial and confidential commissions" to the satisfaction of his royal master; and he it was who

"dutifully accosted His Majesty upon the knee" while the King was playing tennis, and conveyed the "grateful message" of Cromwell's death. During the early years of the Restoration he became Paymaster General of all His Majesty's forces in England. His fortune was "honestly got and unenvied, which," as Evelyn remarked, "is next to a miracle"; and he continued to hold office under James the Second, William the Third, and Queen Anne.

At the age of seventy-six this Titan of finance had married for the second time, and within two years had begotten a son and a set of twins. The first son, Stephen, created Lord Ilchester in 1741, is interesting only as the father of Lady Sarah Lennox's best friend, Lady Susan Fox-Strangways. One of the twins, Christian, was killed at the age of three by a fall from a window, and the old gentleman's brilliance survived only in the second, Henry Fox. For although old Stephen Fox had had several other sons by his first marriage, they had led political careers of unbroken mediocrity and had died before their father.

Henry Fox was schooled at Eton, where he began his lifelong rivalry with the great Pitt. He entered Parliament in 1735, and the upward curve of his fortunes was at once accelerated by his outstanding ability and his passionate partisanship on behalf of Sir Robert Walpole. From that great patron he learned the art which both practiced with so conspicuous a success—the art of buying votes. For idealism was not part of Fox's creed. His conduct was determined rather by expediency, and his fortune was not so honestly got as that of his father.

Their Graces of Richmond, treated Henry Fox with a wary friendship, not with the intimacy they granted to his titled brother. They liked his manners, found him charming in many ways. He entertained them; they received him at Goodwood, the ducal seat, and accepted the truffles which he brought from Wiltshire for the Duchess. But when, in



the winter of 1741, he began to court Lady Caroline, whom he had known for eleven years, they changed their tune; and in March the Duke published in the clearest terms his ban on the whole affair.

The exact grounds of his disapproval are difficult for a modern to understand. It is true that Henry Fox was only four years younger than the Duke of Richmond himself and was nineteen years older than Caroline. But she was twenty-one—an age which in those days was perilously near spinsterhood. One can only conclude that the Duke of Richmond's generosity was, on this occasion at least, not sufficient to surmount the snobbish prejudices of his age and caste. And one is a little inclined to laugh at his contemptuous sniffs at the "son of a footman," when one recalls the origin of the House of Richmond.

In replying to the Duke, Henry maintained a deferential but firm attitude. "Serious, considerate, sincere, older far in mind than in years, with a heart as tender but as firm, too, as ever yet formed, does your Grace think *she* could take a fancy lightly? Or that she can ever alter?" Henry was sure that Caroline would not, and warned the father that he was not deciding on the happiness or misery of his daughter for a few months only, but for her whole life.

Weeks passed, and the courtship dragged on in bickering and uncertainty. Still Caroline would not admit that she had "ever so little altered." The Duke changed his tactics; he stopped arguing and arranged to present a new suitor. What was his dismay to find that on the eve of the introduction his daughter had cut off her eyebrows! Presently the Duke initiated a more drastic campaign to put an end to his daughter's obstinacy. He and the Duchess issued invitations to a ball at Richmond House on May ninth, which the Prince of Wales was to attend, and announced that afterward they would retire to Goodwood for eight months.

At this prospect of separation Henry Fox redoubled his

entreaties, and Caroline's sense of filial duty correspondingly declined. On May third she eloped from Richmond House, and they were married at Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's house in Privy Garden. Only their host and the Duke of Marlborough attended, and the docile clergyman—such were the marriage laws of the day—did not know whom he was marrying. Caroline dutifully returned to her father's house, while Henry composed a letter to the Duke: "She's not yet in my house, so it is still in Your Grace's power to let it be a secret until you go to Goodwood."

This was adding insult to injury, and the resentment of the Duke, who could be as wrathful as he was generous, now flamed sky high. He retired with the Duchess to Goodwood, vowing vengeance on all who were implicated in the affair, and his vengeance went to extraordinary lengths. He issued an edict which forbade any family communication with the Foxes. He refused to receive even those who so much as visited his daughter, and he poured the vials of his wrath on Marlborough and Hanbury Williams, threatening the latter with the loss of the coveted red ribbon of the Bath. Lord Ilchester, ever a prig and a snob, trembled lest his intimacy with the Duke be jeopardized, and though twelve years earlier he had himself contracted a secret marriage with Elizabeth Strangways Horner he hastened to write a letter filled with protestations of innocence and aggrieved surprise. Only the Duke's mother-in-law, Lady Cadogan, and Emily Kildare refused to be cowed.

Indeed, all London society was in an uproar. "If His Majesty's Princess Caroline had been stolen," wrote Walpole, "there could not have been much more noise." And the ducal indignation echoed even in the chambers of state. When the Duke of Newcastle conveyed the news of the elopement to Lord Carteret, his gloom was so intense that Carteret feared "our fleet or army were beat, or Mons betrayed into the hands of the French."

At length, in 1748, on the birth of their first grandchild, another Stephen Fox, the Richmonds were reconciled with their daughter and their son-in-law, who by this time was Secretary at War and something more than the son of a footman. But though the Duke might forgive his daughter, he still maintained his wrath against "those base vile people that have been the abettors of your undutifulness to us." And even with Caroline his magnanimity was put to a severe strain; he was doing his best to forgive, but try as he would he could not forget. "Altho' the same reason for my displeasure with you, exists now as much as it did the day you offended me," he wrote her, "and that the forgiving you is a bad example to my other children, yett they are so young, that was I to stay till they were settled the consequence might in all likelihood be that wee should never see you so long as wee lived, which thoughts our hearts could not bear." And he added, "Tis not easy to forgive the almost gravest injury that could have been done to one."

His greatest fear seems to have been that Caroline's and Henry's conversation with his own children might be such as "to lead them to thinke children independent of their parents." And this it was that made him, in his will, pass over Caroline for Emily as a chaperone for his little girls. Such independence would indeed be enough to make a father and a patriarchal Duke haunt the nave of Chichester Cathedral instead of slumbering peacefully within the tomb he had lately prepared for himself and his family.

It is unlikely, however, that Sarah, as she crossed the Irish Channel, was much troubled about elopement or the limits of paternal authority. Her thoughts were occupied rather in conjuring up a picture of her life among the Foxes at Holland House. It would not be like going into a strange household, for she had stayed there with her mother after her father's death in 1751; and since then her recollections of her handsome, dignified, and rather Dutch-looking sister,

Caroline, and her rotund, shrewd, and genial brother-in-law, Henry Fox, had been kept vivid by an exchange of frequent letters and occasional visits between them and the Kildares. Naturally, she had heard a great deal about her two nephews, Stephen and Charles James Fox. Charles, only two years her junior, was an unusually charming and lively boy, and his father's delight.

The Kildares considered Henry Fox almost too indulgent a parent; they said that his boys amused him so much that he refused to discipline them over trifles. Yet he was scrupulously exact in keeping his promises to them. According to one story often told in the family, Mr. Fox had once promised Charles he might watch the destruction of a wall. But, by some oversight, the boy was not present when it was demolished, and so Mr. Fox had it built up again in order to make good his promise!

A brother-in-law so scrupulous for the happiness of the people he was fond of would make a very nice guardian indeed. Caroline, she knew, was kind and affectionate, and Sarah was prepared to behave like a daughter towards this sister who was twenty-two years her senior. Emily adored Caroline, and said that her children and Mr. Fox fairly worshiped her. And, as if to make her new family all that she could wish for, Sarah was going to find another girl there of about her own age, Mr. Fox's niece.

In 1753, Lord Ilchester had married Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Strangways Horner. From Elizabeth the Strangways estates in Dorsetshire had passed into the Fox family, together with the surname. Lord Ilchester, who always appears a somewhat pompous and fussy person, preferred the seclusion of his country estates at Melbury and Redlynch to London, and his wife dutifully shared his taste. Not so their seventeen-year-old daughter, Lady Susan. This high-spirited and vivacious girl found life at Holland House more suited to her inclination than vegetation in the country

surrounded by a flock of younger sisters. Her charm and intelligence made her a great favorite with her uncle and aunt, and, having no daughter of their own, they encouraged Susan to make them long visits. Naturally, Sarah was very anxious to see the girl, who, inevitably, would be her intimate companion on many occasions. Much depended on whether they would hit it off.

In Sarah's time, Kensington—now practically in London—lay in the open fields, and at night the muddy roads that connected it with the metropolis were often infested with footpads. Yet as she passed through the gates and bowled along beneath the fine avenue of elms, Sarah beheld much the same brick house, ornamented with stone turrets, cloisters, and balconies, that was still a famous home of the Fox family when it was recently gutted by a German incendiary bomb. For when the junior line descended from Stephen Fox became extinct, the Fox-Strangways, or Ilchester line, took it over. Sarah's heart must have warmed toward the old house where she had stayed with her mother. And then the coach drew up beside the great door, and Sarah, all impatience, alighted and walked quickly past the liveried footmen.

Doubtless, her eldest sister embraced and welcomed her with that blend of dignity and warmth characteristic of the Lennoxes—explaining, perhaps, as she did so that Mr. Fox regretted he could not be there to greet her. For in 1759 he was still a fairly busy politician, and his duties as Paymaster kept him in London a great part of the time. The boys were at Eton, until the Christmas holidays.

If Susan was present, the two girls must have looked each other over as they were introduced. They were very different—Sarah tall and strikingly handsome, Susan of average height, and well made, not exactly pretty, but with features and expression that radiated breeding and a subtle intelligence. One pictures them taking a veiled look at one

another as they exchanged civilities—and liking each other on sight.

Sarah soon found that she was surrounded by an atmosphere of undoubting and undoubted affection. All the Foxes shared a perfect similarity of tastes and pursuits, and admired each other with an affection that was almost, but never quite, extravagant. For the strong good sense inherent in the Fox character kept it from degenerating into mutual admiration. They adored each other, but always with a sense of humor.

The presiding genius of the household was Henry Fox, and he soon made his pretty young sister-in-law feel welcome. "Come, my dear," one imagines him urging her after a late Sunday breakfast, "go put on your cape and bonnet, and I will show you my shrubbery." Then, as they strolled about the grounds, he doubtless pointed out, with affectionate pride, the features and beauties of Holland House. For soon after their marriage, when the Foxes had been looking about for a suburban residence, they had fallen in love with Holland House, and had remained in love with it ever since. The place had the peculiar charm inherent in an ancient abode.

In 1607 the Manor of Kensington, previously held by the De Veres, became the property of Sir Walter Cope, a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to James the First. Cope laid the foundation of "Cope Castle" and built the center and turrets, a feature of the southern facade. The house owed its name to Sir Henry Rich, a descendant of an opulent mercer of the time of Henry the Sixth, who married Sir Walter Cope's daughter and heiress, Isabel. For, as a reward for various services at court, chiefly as matrimonial envoy for Charles the First, Rich was created Baron Kensington and Earl of Holland. Rich gave Holland House, which he had from his wife, not only the name, not only the wings and arcades which he had built and decorated by the best archi-

tects of his day, but a great tradition. The first Earl of Holland received all the clever and the fashionable, and the hospitality which he began at Holland House continued through the centuries.

During the Civil Wars, Rich, who was on both sides, lapsed back to the Royalist cause, and was executed; and for a time Holland House was inhabited by representatives of the Protectorate. Eventually the widowed Countess of Holland was allowed to return, and in spite of all she had suffered she came home breathing defiance of Puritan ordinances. And though the theaters were closed everywhere, under her regime "various authors and actors delighted an audience by stealth at Holland House." If Mr. Fox regaled Sarah with this story, he undoubtedly added that she would have an opportunity to do the same, but not by stealth, for Charles was forever putting on plays, and plans were already afoot for the Christmas holidays.

Skimming through the annals of the Hollands and the Warwicks, it appears that Addison became the master of Holland House in 1716, when, after "a very long and arduous courtship" he married the widowed Countess of Warwick. However ardently Addison may have wooed, "Holland House, although a large house, could not contain the Countess of Warwick, and one guest, Peace." The friction arose, perhaps, because Addison continued to "fair sex it" until, after three years, a combination of asthma and dropsy brought an end to his misery.

The succeeding Lord Warwick, seventh Earl of Holland, died without issue in 1721, and Holland House passed to his cousin, William Edwards. Then the place was let, but the roster of those who lodged there for twenty-five years did not decline in distinction. William Penn, Sir John Chardin, the Persian traveler, Mrs. Morice, daughter of Bishop Atterbury, Shippen, Lechmere the Whig lawyer, all resided at Holland House for brief periods. Indeed, the list of eminent people

who have owned, visited or lodged at Holland House has continued through Sarah's time and on to this very day; it almost encourages one in the pretty fancy that certain houses produce brilliant company as certain spots of the earth produce brilliant flowers, because the conditions for the crop are perennially perfect.

Holland House had long since been "decaying" in 1749 when the Foxes leased it for £182, 16s., and 9 d.; and they immediately began to restore the house and grounds on a scale not usual for mere tenants. They called in William Kent to advise upon new terraces, and Peter Collinson and Charles Hamilton, both eminent arboriculturists, recommended suitable shrubs and planned new plantations and vistas. Their advice had inspired Mr. Fox to a veritable orgy of planting. "But in those days I did not know an oak from a gooseberry bush," he was wont to declare. "Now, I won't say how knowing I am, but only that I have planted sixty sorts of shrubs that I had not before that will abide our climate."

While Mr. Fox discoursed on horticulture, one imagines that Sarah was absorbed in childhood memories. The pair of stone piers which Inigo Jones had designed for the Earl of Holland in 1629 may have caught her fancy, for example, more because she and Louisa had often used them for goal posts, than for their beauty of design. And now this visit promised to be much more amusing. For, although not yet fifteen, she was now a grown young lady who could take part in the soirées and enter into the delicious competition of masculine conquest. And Holland House parties were very grand affairs; Mr. Fox entertained on a scale suitable to the dignity of a Paymaster and with a geniality that suited his disposition.

No doubt she heard much of these parties, both past and yet to come. Perhaps Susan had described a recent soirée when the balcony as well as the Gilt Room had been lighted



up and the company had danced in both—Lady Caroline with the Earl of March, Lady Betty Spencer with Lord Cathcart, and so on. On that occasion three card tables had been placed in Lady Caroline's dressing room, and the "setters by" had played quadrille, or cut in at whist, or played cribbage. Several, among them Sir Horace Walpole who was doubtless gathering impressions for one of his inimitable letters, had only looked on. Tea, negus, and so forth had been served in the Tapestry Room, and at one in the morning, sixty-two in all went down to eat a cold supper in the Saloon. After finishing off the collation with a dessert and ice, those who had not danced before performed minuets. All had stayed late, except Lady Townshend, Lady Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Marlborough and one Mr. Legge. Indeed, judging from the steward's report, the party had been a huge success, for no dancer had left before three.

All this was undoubtedly more interesting to Sarah than Mr. Fox's sixty varieties of rare shrubs, and one imagines that she bombarded her brother-in-law with questions. What had they meant when they had said that Lord Digby and Mr. Bateman had walked about most of the evening admiring? Was it the glittering Gilt Room they admired, or the company? And perhaps Mr. Fox replied, with a sly twinkle, that she would discover all in good time. For he looked forward to her gracing many occasions of the same kind, and he foresaw that such gentlemen as chose to walk about admiring would not leave her long in doubt.

Sarah's early letters prove that all the young people at Holland House were as devoted to Mr. Fox as he was to them. Yet in their old age both Sarah and Susan questioned his influence. No young person of their acquaintance, they agreed, could have suffered the tutelage of Henry Fox without becoming the worse for it. Their opinion has a priggish ring, for even if they had doubted his moral code in their

youth, neither of them would have forsworn the glamorous days at Holland House for the preceptorship of Samuel Johnson himself. Yet the two old women knew what they were talking about. There was a quality in Henry Fox that was singularly disrupting to youth. It is significant that not until after his death in 1774 did his devoted and brilliant son, Charles James Fox, break away from his party affiliations to become the great champion of liberty.

Henry Fox has painted his self-portrait in his letters and in a short but pungent Memoir. He wrote as he spoke before the House. His pages are not crowded with flowers of rhetoric. He confined his style to sterling sense and sound judgment. Again and again his phrases are pointed up with the peculiarly genial Fox wit, and occasionally they display an almost classical polish. He reveals himself as an able politician, a devoted but too indulgent parent and guardian, a zealous friend, and a man of parts.

His reader cannot help but be drawn to him, as were his intimates. If he failed to preach the sterner virtues, he encouraged the graces. Seldom has the natural man appeared more attractive than in his family—or, it might be added, the natural woman than in his wife's family.

Across nearly two centuries Henry Fox still seems a very lovable man. Yet the smudge on his record is no streak of dust—as Paymaster he was accused of greatly enriching himself at the public expense. This is an indelible stain, although it is only fair to add that his were the political standards of his time. Fox's enemies also asserted that he lacked fixed moral principles. One pompous critic found grievous fault with him for being "too unwary in ridiculing and exposing such principles in others." In other words, Henry Fox scorned cant and hypocrisy and was frankly cynical about the motives which control human behavior. No honest modern would criticize him on this ground, although even in the twentieth century a practical cynic is not generally

regarded as an ideal preceptor for young people. The comment throws fresh light on the Duke of Richmond's prejudice, and explains the rather carping criticism of Sarah and Susan in their old age.

To return to the autumn of 1759—it was not long before Royalty heard of Sarah's return to Holland House, and when Royalty looked at his pretty sister-in-law, Henry Fox became something more than kind.

## IV

### *A Royal Suitor*

WHEN THE old King, George the Second, heard of Sarah's return to Holland House, he remembered the romps he had enjoyed with her eight years before, and insisted on her being presented immediately. Delighted by the royal interest in their young sister, the Foxes soon brought Sarah to a "Drawing Room" at Kensington Palace.

Although she had every reason to expect a gracious welcome, the occasion was, inevitably, an ordeal to the young and inexperienced girl. When the time came to take her place in the coach beside Lady Caroline and Mr. Fox, she must have wondered—as girls do—whether her best sack back brocaded gown, even with its fichu of fine lace around her shoulders and cascades falling from each elbow, was really grand enough to go to Court in. And as they drew near the Palace and fell in with the long line of coaches and chairs entering the courtyard, it must have seemed as if all the fashionables in England were waiting upon His Majesty that evening.

Then at last the coach came to a standstill, and a footman opened the door. They alighted, and Sarah followed her sister up the great staircase amid a crush of fine ladies and gentlemen and each one, it seemed, was more magnificently robed than the last. One pictures Sarah staring at the bright costumes and marveling at all the piled up head dresses and

flowing hair, at the fans fluttering expertly to set off spots and patches, and inwardly noting the endless variety of lappets, laces, ribbons, and feathers.

As Mr. Fox and Caroline presented her to their acquaintance, many must have looked with frank admiration at the tall, shy beauty with startled eyes. For Sarah's natural ease deserted her on this occasion, and although one or two of Caroline's friends spoke to her encouragingly she found nothing to reply. Unconscious of the rose-like bloom of her skin, she perhaps envied her elders their rouge, or wished that Caroline had allowed her to put at least one simple ornament in her luxuriant black hair.

If only Louisa had been with Sarah to share her agonies over these constant presentations to Caroline's acquaintance, she might have carried them off with more of an air. As it was, she could only stare like a gawky school-girl—though noticing every detail to make a good letter and give Louisa "the feel." Certainly the upholstery and hangings here in the King's Presence Chamber offered a dusty, shabby background for all this magnificently garbed company. It was true, then, what they said about the King being a miser. Evidently the Palace had not been done over in years.

As they neared the threshold of the Drawing Room where the King was holding his Court, Sarah's curiosity probably got the better of her deportment. As she stood on tip-toe craning her neck to see beyond the couples immediately in front of her, she caught a glimpse of a stout, short little old gentleman with a fiery complexion and under-hanging jaw. That, she knew, was her old friend, the King. On his right stood a tall, middle-aged lady with a forbidding expression, the Dowager Princess of Wales. But who was the sour-faced old maid on the left?

"That," Caroline would have informed her, "is the Princess Amelia, the King's daughter."

What a voice the Princess had! It could be heard above the hum of talk, and sounded even gruffer than her father's.

Sarah's moment came, at last. Caroline took her by the hand and led her forward. In a daze she heard Caroline present her, and she swept the King a deep curtsy.

When she arose and found herself "in the midst of the circle, the King began to tease and play with her as if she were still a child of five years old." Henry Napier, who has described the incident as his mother, Sarah, told it to him, says, "she naturally colored up and shrank from this unexpected familiarity, became abashed, silent, and altogether out of countenance."

Her embarrassment at the King's chucks and guffaws provoked the gruff, pompous little monarch exceedingly—and George the Second could be quite terrifying when annoyed. He had been known to shake his fist in a courtier's face, and call everybody names. In his rage he sometimes kicked his wig and coat about like a petulant child.

Now he glared at Sarah for a long moment, and then turned abruptly away from her, exclaiming, in a rough voice: "Pooh! She's grown quite stupid."

Sarah's grace and dignity in bearing his peevishness made a deep impression on one important bystander. "It was at this very moment," Henry Napier continues, "that the young Prince, soon to become George the Third, was struck with admiration and pity." With cheerful, good-natured affability, the Prince at once came forward and spoke to her.

At twenty-two, Prince George was judged handsome. He was tall and robust, and had fair, fresh coloring, blue eyes and extremely fine teeth. His light auburn hair "grew very handsomely to his face." But his portraits, even in youth, do not impress the beholder with his beauty, nor indicate intelligence. They reveal that he had rather wide, dilated nostrils, protuberant eyes, and fleshy jowls—in short, a stolid, un-

imaginative countenance with a look of mulish obduracy about it. But after suffering two strutting dwarfs, George the First and George the Second—the English were impressed by the Prince's "unparall'd air of majestic Dignity," and by "the noble openness in his Countenance." Furthermore, the Prince had a strong, melodious, and clear voice, and expressed himself with "the greatest grace and precision." In their pleasure at hearing their future monarch speak English without a strong German accent, his subjects overlooked the substance of what he said. His platitudinous thoughts were so highly polite and appropriate, and were delivered with such calmness and composure, that they seemed to indicate "a proper firmness and resolution, and great presence of mind." So the English smiled on the first Hanoverian Prince who was born native, and who spoke and bore himself like an Englishman.

Sarah was aware, no doubt, that she had found favor in the eyes of the Prince of Wales. His courtesy made others anxious to pay her their respects, and when he left her side she became the center of a group. Her first appearance at Court had turned out to be most agreeable, after all.

When they descended the great staircase again and mounted their coach, it is unlikely that Sarah asked Mr. Fox if he thought the Prince's behavior significant. As she reveals herself in her early letters, she was ever the most uncalculating and spontaneous youngster imaginable. As they drove home she may have said, "I can't wait to tell Susan about it!" Or, "How Louisa will laugh when I write how I put my worst foot forward and the kind Prince came to my rescue."

It is certain, however, that the "wily old Fox" had noted and observed every detail of the occurrence. From that day forward he pointed a royal scent. And though Mr. Fox had little occasion to prick up his ears for nearly a twelvemonth, perhaps signs were not wanting to show that the young

Prince's admiration was ripening into an attachment. Sarah wrote years afterward, "I was not near fifteen when my poor head began to be turned by adulation in consequence of my supposed favor." Indeed, she actually resented her youthful success in her old age. "I ought to have been in my nursery," she added sententiously, "and I shall ever think it was unfair to bring me into the world a child." But at the time she seems to have entered wholeheartedly and without a qualm into the pleasures that accrued from the Prince's favor.

Then, on October twenty-fifth, 1760, the old King unexpectedly died. "I must tell you all I know of departed Majesty," Horace Walpole wrote George Montagu. "He went to bed well, last night, rose at six this morning as usual, looked, I suppose, if all his money was in his purse, and called for his chocolate. A little after seven he went into the water closet; the German *valet de chambre* heard a noise, listened, heard something like a groan, ran in, and found the hero of Oudenarde and Dettingen on the floor, with a rash on his right temple, by falling against the corner of the bureau. He tried to speak, could not, and expired . . . For my part, like a new courtier, I comfort myself 'considering that a gracious Prince comes next.'"

Beneath his gracious exterior the Prince, who now succeeded to the throne as George the Third, was a dull lad brought up by narrow-minded people. As Thackeray says, the cleverest tutors could have done little to expand that small intellect, though they might have improved his tastes and taught his perceptions some generosity." No attempt had ever been made to do anything of the kind. His mother, the widowed Princess of Wales, had kept him so firmly tied to her apron strings that he had remained reserved and childish until well on in his teens—until, as the gruff old King put it, his grandson was fit for nothing but to read her the Bible.



In short, the dull, good boy had grown up a docile and dependent son, full of the prejudices fostered by the Princess of Wales and her favorite, Lord Bute.

John Stuart, Earl of Bute, was born a poor Scotch nobleman, with a proud and ambitious disposition. His talents, however, were not remarkable. In 1737, when he was twenty-four, he had been elected to fill a vacancy among the representative peers for Scotland, who were, practically, nominated by his uncle, Lord Ilay. Two years later Bute had followed the Duke of Argyll, who was also his uncle, into opposition over the question of peace or war with Spain, thereby severing his connection with Lord Ilay and losing his seat at the next general election, in 1741. For five years after this setback, Bute had been forced to live in retirement and poverty on his own little Scotch island. For, although his wife was the daughter of Edward and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and prospective heiress to one of the greatest fortunes in England, Bute's father-in-law contributed nothing toward the support of his daughter's rapidly growing family beyond the advice to go on living economically in Scotland.

In 1746 Bute had decided to try his fortune again, and had taken a house for £45 a year at the fashionable resort of Twickenham. In spite of his poverty, he managed to go about a great deal, and attracted some attention in society by his great physical beauty. He displayed his principal asset, a superlative pair of legs, in becoming costumes at masquerades and private theatricals. As Lothario in *The Fair Penitent*, given at the Duchess of Queensberry's, Lord Bute had first attracted the attention of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who promptly invited him to Leicester House and took him into favor. Six months before Frederick's death, in 1751, Bute had been appointed Lord of the Prince's Bed-chamber.

After the loss of this place, Bute had again lapsed into complete obscurity. For four years he was such a nonentity

that no one noticed the significance of his assiduity at Leicester House. But by 1756 Bute had become one of the most important men in the country, as the declared favorite of the Princess of Wales and the Groom of the Stole at Leicester House; and in 1757 he had been the author of a treaty between the Princess and Pitt which had led to the two ministers, Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle, taking office together.

With the young Prince, the future King, Bute's intimacy was equally marked; he became his constant companion and confidant, and Bute used his influence to inspire the Prince with animosity against the Whigs and with the high notions of the sovereign's powers and duties found in Bolingbroke's *Patriot King*. Even when George reached manhood, the Princess never allowed him to escape from her favorite's influence. His comings and goings were kept under the strictest surveillance. Indeed, the only expedition he had ever been permitted had been to go with Lord Bute to the bleak island from which that Scotch nobleman took his title. No doubt Prince George had enjoyed the excursion, for he looked upon his tutor and looked to him for guidance in everything. When they were separated the Prince constantly consulted Lord Bute by letter, always addressing him as "My dearest Friend."

To this tractable young man had been taught the usual accomplishments suitable to a prince. He rode to hounds, acquitting himself at the national sport with sufficient good sportsmanship to please the English. In the ballroom he was both graceful and genteel, for, according to one admiring object, he danced "perhaps better than anybody ever did and with an unparell'd air of majestic dignity." But the pastime he most delighted in was "the study of the art of the locksmith and the dissection of clocks and watches."

Unlike the French King, Louis the Sixteenth, who enjoyed similar hobby, George was subject to the temptations of

young manhood. A legend persists that he had been attracted by the charms of a young Quakeress, one Hannah Lightfoot. The romance has been told in detail again and again—without convincing the historians. The story runs that the young Prince became so in love that he actually married Miss Lightfoot in the presence of his brother, Edward, Duke of York, and another person who has never had the honor of being named, in Curzon Street Chapel, Mayfair. The pair are supposed to have had several children before Hannah was disposed of by espousing her to a "Strephon named Axford, who, for a pecuniary consideration, took Hannah to wife, and asked no impertinent questions." The scandal won little attention during George the Third's lifetime; and, surely, if he had begot children by Hannah Lightfoot they would not have allowed their paternity to remain ignored. In contradiction to this legend, one contemporary recorded that "George III exhibited a Model of Self Command and of Continence at twenty-two, than which Antiquity, Greek or Roman, can produce nothing more admirable in the persons of Alexander or Scipio." Such restraint becomes even more impressive when one remembers that George III was destined to become the father of no fewer than fifteen children.

Sarah went again and again with Lady Caroline and her new intimate, Lady Susan, to the balls at St. James and the Drawing Rooms at Kensington Palace—and Mr. Fox noticed that the King took "every opportunity of conversing with her."

Her sister, Mr. Fox, and Susan all assured her that she ought to feel extremely flattered. What did His Majesty talk to her about? they wanted to know. Sarah could not always remember conversations unless they were amusing, and the colloquies of her royal admirer were somewhat labored.

"He often talks," she told them, "about the ways and habits of Kings."

One day he talked to her about the "Parks." These ornamental tracts of land led him to utter his first meaningful indiscretion. He spoke most "significantly about connecting Kensington Palace and grounds with Holland House." Sarah was not unduly excited by this plan to extend royalty's acre, and even when the King singled her out at one of his Court functions that were conducted with so much pomp and ceremony, she did not enjoy herself half so much as she did at the spontaneous, gay gatherings at Holland House. For, as Thackeray says, the Hanoverian kings entertained their Courts in the spirit of a mill-horse going round and round in an unchanging circle, and palace balls and Drawing Rooms followed as per schedule, in a constant track. Experienced courtiers, "by the assistance of an almanack for the day of the week, and a watch for the hour of the day," were fully informed without any other intelligence than their memories, "of every transaction within the verge of the Court." Since the young King was incapable of outbursts of bad manners such as his grandfather had indulged in, his Court entertainments held in the long and wearisome Hanoverian tradition lacked even the titivation and excitement of a royal rebuff.

Probably Sarah enjoyed the affairs more than other girls of her age, because of the young King's favor; but in December, 1760, when her nephews, who were so much more like younger brothers, came home from school for the holidays, she threw herself into the agreeable doings at Holland House without giving royalty a second thought. Young Charles James Fox, who afterwards confessed that his success as an orator in the House of Commons evolved from the early training he had had as an actor at Holland House, soon had as tutor, Dr. Francis, teaching them all to declaim *Hermione*.

Sarah played the lead and displayed her pretty person and abundant charm to such advantage that Mr. Fox, who fancied himself as a critic of acting, declared, "I never saw a part so well acted in my life."

Triumphs of this sort were more exhilarating than the King's attentions—although these were entering a more interesting stage. Soon after the play, on Twelfth Night, during a private ball "to which very few people were invited," the King drew Sarah aside and conversed with her alone for the first time.

He took her into the tea room and asked about her stay in Ireland. "Tell me about your sister's household. Does Lady Emily, or Lord Kildare, govern? Either a husband or wife must take the lead."

Sarah replied, "I think any husband who allowed his wife to govern would be very foolish." Then, perhaps with a challenging sweep of her eyelashes, she added, "Everybody says you are governed by your mother."

Slightly disconcerted, the King returned, "And do you not think parents are the best people to govern?"

"Yes, sometimes," Sarah admitted. "But a German woman is not the best person to govern the King of England."

One can well imagine how this tactless remark must have confounded George the Third; it sounded as if she were repeating what she had heard her elders say. And he must have known that when his father died in 1751 Henry Fox had opposed the regency of the widow—perhaps on these very grounds—and had favored that of the King's brother, the Duke of Cumberland. Yet George the Third was so much under Sarah's spell that he furthered the conversation, and finally the King wanted her to say something trivial in itself, but something with which she did not agree.

"No," Sarah replied, "it would be telling an untruth."

"But you would not mind telling a white lie?"

With this insistence on plain speaking, Sarah's first private conversation with the King ended. Though it had been more sustained than any that they had had before, she probably would not have repeated it if everyone had not asked her, on getting home, what the King had said.

She was absorbed again in the preparation of another play, and her performance brought her praise from an exceedingly discriminating observer. "I was excessively amused on Tuesday night," Horace Walpole wrote George Montagu on January twenty-second, 1761. "There was a play at Holland House, acted by children; not all children, for Lady Sarah Lennox and Lady Susan Strangways played the women. It was *Jane Shore*; one Price, Lord Barrington's nephew, was Gloster, and acted better than three parts of the comedians. Charles Fox, Hastings; a little Nichols, who spoke well, Belmour; Lord Ofaly, Lord Ashbroke and other boys, did the rest—but the two girls were delightful; and acted with so much nature and simplicity, that they appeared the very things they represented. Lady Sarah was more beautiful than you can conceive, and her very awkwardness gave an air of truth to the shame of the part, and the antiquity of the time, which was kept up by her dress, taken out of Montfaucon. Lady Susan was dressed from Jane Seymour, and all the parts were clothed in ancient habits, and with the most minute propriety. I was infinitely more struck with the last scene between the two women than ever I was when I have seen it on the stage. When Lady Sarah was in white, with her hair about her ears, and on the ground, no Magdalen by Correggio was half so lovely and expressive."

Sarah was lovely, as one may see from the Sir Joshua Reynolds' portraits. Henry Fox said she was "as beautiful as a girl could be." The cliché did not satisfy him, so he went on: "Her beauty is not easily described, otherwise than by saying she had the finest complexion, most beautiful hair, and the prettiest person that ever was seen, with a sprightly

air, a pretty mouth, & remarkably fine teeth, & excess of bloom in her cheeks, little eyes—but this is not describing her, for her great beauty was a peculiarity of countenance, that made her at the same time different from and prettier than any other girl I ever saw.” Henry Fox might have summed up Sarah’s fascination by saying that she had “sex appeal.”

Ambition stirred again in his breast as it became more and more evident that the King was falling in love with his sister-in-law—and it was generally supposed that he had renounced ambition since his appointment as Paymaster in 1757. A man who had risen to become Secretary of State, a member of the Cabinet, and Leader of the House of Commons under the Newcastle ministry in 1756 was considered to be stepping down when he accepted the Paymastership. Probably Fox had accepted the appointment because it had afforded a safe and lucrative retreat, at a time when he had worked himself into an uncomfortable impasse; for although his attitude on the Regency Bill had increased his favor with the old King, his actual influence had not increased in spite of his advocating regency by the monarch’s favorite son, the Duke of Cumberland.

The Duke of Newcastle had, it was true, an intimate connection with George the Second, but he never really trusted Fox, although the latter had served in his ministry. And Lord Hardwicke, at that time Lord Chancellor, was Fox’s declared foe. His unnatural alliance with these worthies disgusted the elder Pitt, who, considering himself deserted, gave in to the blandishments of the Princess of Wales. This had been a fatal blow to Fox’s prospects, for the Princess had become his enemy when he had taken his attitude on the Regency Bill. So Fox had had to face both the thinly disguised antagonism of Newcastle and the open animosity of the Princess’s coterie at Leicester House.

Henry Fox was still, in 1757, in mild favor with the King.

But George the Second was then an old man. If one were to rise to giddy heights at the close of his reign one might expect a corresponding fall at his grandson's succession. So Fox had chosen wisely, from the point of view of self-interest, in accepting the office of Paymaster. He had had other reasons beside the sudden decline of his political hopes; he had already begun to suffer from dropsy; he had acquired no substantial fortune to leave to his sons. According to the political ethics of his day, he was justified in taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Paymastership to enrich himself at the public expense. He had made a very human if not an exemplary choice. But lately, after enriching himself for four years, Fox had turned his thoughts toward a peerage—for either himself or Lady Caroline. He sought to obtain it through the Duke of Cumberland, and also, with less reason, through Lord Bute.

Possibly Bute was anxious to consolidate his position with all factions. For when Mr. Fox "look'd, or ask'd for a certain date; he said within a twelvemonth certainly." The old politician went away from this interview confident: "Often as I have been deceived in my lifetime, I have no doubt of this." And there the matter rested when George the Third suddenly became more assiduous in his addresses to Sarah.

On Thursday, February nineteenth, 1761, Lady Sarah and Lady Susan went to Court with Lady Caroline Fox and Lady Albemarle, sister to the late Duke of Richmond. The ball-room at St. James' Palace presented a brilliant spectacle. Prisms and drops on chandeliers and sconces reflected the light from hundreds of candles; dancers moved with courtly grace about the highly polished floor to the music that floated down from the musicians' gallery. Gentlemen in powdered wigs, velvet coats embroidered with silver and gold, in knee breeches, advanced to bow and retreat from ladies with painted patched faces and ornate head-dresses, in low-cut bodices adorned with diamonds and cobweb lace and spread-



ing skirts of brocade and satin. The dancers moved through the measures of the minuets and quadrilles with the formal grace of tiny figures on a child's music box. Then, when the music ceased, the ladies sank down with a flutter of fans and smoothing of skirts to flirt and gossip; and the men sauntered about to pay court to the fair or to further political intrigue.

During such interludes the King, according to Henry Fox, used to seek conversation with Sarah. As Lady Susan "was ever with" her younger friend, she often "came in for her share of the discourse."

On this occasion Susan, chaperoned by Lady Albemarle, was sitting on one side of the room, and Sarah was with Lady Caroline, seated opposite. The King, after bestowing a look in Sarah's direction, suddenly came toward Susan and engaged her in conversation.

After an exchange of civilities, the King asked, "You are going into Somersetshire. When do you return?"

"Not before winter, Sir," Susan replied, "and I don't know how soon in winter."

"Is there nothing that will bring you back to town before winter?" the King continued.

"I don't know of anything."

"Wouldn't you like to see a Coronation?"

"Yes, Sir. I hope I should come to see that!"

"I hear it's very popular my having put it off."

Susan made no comment.

"Won't it be a much finer sight when there is a Queen?" the King asked.

"To be sure, Sir."

With royal complacency the King continued, "I have a great many applications from abroad but I don't like them. I have had none at home; I should like that better."

This confession bewildered Susan, but she was too astute to hazard a reply. So she waited—doubtless with an encouraging smile—for the King to come to the point.

"What do you think of your friend?" the King finally asked. "You know whom I mean. Don't you think her fittest?"

"Think, Sir?" Susan stammered, uncertain of his meaning.

"There will be no Coronation until there is a Queen," the King explained, "and I think your friend the fittest person for it. Tell your friend so from me."

Susan was pondering this intriguing avowal when the King repeated conclusively, "I think none so fit." Then, to make his meaning quite plain, he went across the room to Sarah, and bade her ask Susan what he had been saying. "Make her tell you, and tell you all," he implored.

Sarah assured the King she would—and she did.

Of course, the girls were not allowed to keep the matter between themselves, for each move of the King had been noted, and his conversation partly overheard. When he was told exactly what the King had said, old Fox pricked up his ears.

"H.M. is not given to joke," he wrote in his Memoir—a diary of all that was happening and what was likely to come of it—"and this would be a very bad joke, too. Is it serious? Strange if it is, and a strange way of going about it."

Although doubtful of the King's intentions, Henry Fox saw instantly the great advantage to himself if his pretty sister-in-law should become Queen. He also saw the disadvantage of leaving so brilliant an opportunity in the hands of a young and inexperienced girl of sixteen; he promptly appointed himself her campaign manager. His comments on the affair, recorded from day to day in his Memoir, read like a combined promoter's report and prospectus. Yet, adroit as he was, he reckoned without the lady in the case.

For Sarah, just past her sixteenth birthday, was a lively baggage. She had been tremendously flattered by the King's favor because it added a royal feather to her cap. But to have him as a husband was another matter. As a man, George the

Third had not captivated her at all. Besides, she was engaged in another affair.

Sarah was flirting with Lord Newbottle, Lord Ancram's son, whom Henry Fox dubbed "a vain, insignificant puppy, lively and not ugly." Lord Newbottle had a reputation for making love to all the pretty girls, but at the moment when he first drew Sarah he had seemed, for once, much in love with Lady Caroline Russell, the Duke of Bedford's daughter. For that very reason he had attracted Sarah; like many another girl just becoming aware of her fascination, she had been eager to test her power. So she had determined to get Lord Newbottle away from Lady Caroline, and she soon became "so much pleased with her success that she grew too much pleased with his Lordship."

What Sarah had begun out of vanity she presently mistook for love. Now she fancied her heart was involved. But no matter how trivial her attachment, for the moment she was easily vulnerable concerning Lord Newbottle. Henry Fox's caustic comment, "It was really a commerce of vanity, not of love, on each side," is tinged with the disappointment of an old man whose hopes are being threatened. He was not wholly fair to the natural feelings of an inexperienced girl.

Mr. Fox had already banished Lord Newbottle from Holland House, but when he suspected that this did not prevent Sarah from meeting Newbottle, his indignation waxed hot against those who were secretly furthering the flirtation. Mr. Fox was particularly annoyed with Lord and Lady George Lennox for "forgetting or despising all honor or regard to their sister." Yet since Lord Newbottle was Lady George's brother, it was only natural for the George Lennoxes to sponsor his suit.

These two helped Sarah to slip out of Holland House early one morning to meet her lover in the park, when Lady Caroline and Lady Kildare, who was visiting, were still asleep. As she hurried across the gardens on that winter

morning to keep the tryst, Sarah was all eagerness and trepidation. Lord Newbottle was so very volatile, his feelings for her were now so strong and then so faint, that for all she knew his intentions were purely frivolous. Perhaps that was the very reason why he had caught and held her fancy, why she was tempted to venture with him into the region of hitherto unknown emotions. Sarah did not rightly know her own heart.

But when they met she imagined she did. For once her fitful lover did not disappoint her. "It was here settled he should ask his father's consent." They dared not linger.

As she crept back toward the great house, Sarah may have paused to look up at its wine-colored brick walls, turrets, gables and arcades, its mullions and copings gleaming in the pale sunshine, with a kind of wonder. A look, a clasp, a kiss, an impulsive vow had altered her whole life since she had slipped through the side door less than an hour ago.

There is reason to believe that the lovers' rendezvous was not so secret as they imagined. For Sarah stood high in the King's regard, and her doings were watched. A rumor has persisted through the centuries that Lord Bute in some way heard of the projected meeting in the park, told the King about it, and arranged for His Majesty to witness it without being seen. If it was Lady George Lennox who tipped off Lord Bute to posting the King as a witness, she richly deserved Mr. Fox's contempt. He damned her for "a jade." In any case, if Lord Bute knew about Lady Sarah's rendezvous with Lord Newbottle, he assuredly lost no time in apprising the Princess of Wales.

The gossips did not offer a purely political interpretation of Bute's relationship with the Princess Dowager. Although she was a sere, opinionated matron, and he a handsome, pretentious man in his early fifties, people explained his influence over the young King, who in turn was led by his mother, on the ground that the Princess Dowager was Bute's mistress.

The scandal, however, was never founded on anything but conjecture and the malice of faction, and it is significant that there had been no open quarrel between George the Second and his grandson after Bute had acted as intermediary in organizing "the last Leicester House opposition." The old King, after a futile attempt to persuade Parliament to remove Lord Bute from the Princess on the ground that he had endeavored to create misunderstandings in the royal family, had merely reversed the usual procedure of Hanoverian Kings—to turn the Prince of Wales out of St. James'—by bringing him into it. The occasion chosen to separate the Prince from his mother and Lord Bute had been his eighteenth birthday, when the Regency Act expired and he attained his statutory majority. Accordingly, on May thirtieth, 1756, a formal message had been sent to the Princess of Wales and her son, offering the Prince an allowance of £40,000 per annum, and an apartment at Kensington and another at St. James'. The Princess's acceptance had been accompanied by an oral request that Bute should be made Groom of the Stole in the proposed new establishment of the Prince of Wales, a regularization of a state of affairs which, unknown to the King and the ministers, had been in existence for the best part of a year. Thus the influence of the mother and her favorite had continued without interruption until the young Prince became King.

The letters from George the Third to Lord Bute which have recently been published\* reveal the idolatrous adoration and abject self-abasement which the young King offered his tutor at the beginning of his reign. Bute was the friend who had been sent by the "Great Power above" to conduct diffident Majesty along the "difficult road." George looked to Bute to correct his indifference, his indolence, and all his other faults which the Scotch nobleman had been good

\* *The Letters of George the Third to Lord Bute*, edited by Mr. Romney Sedgwick: Macmillan & Co., London, 1939.

enough to point out. He knew that unless he followed Bute's advice he would "inevitably sink." He could only attain his "gole"—to turn out exactly as his tutor wished him to—if Lord Bute banished all thoughts of leaving him; if Bute resolved, perhaps not for his sake but for the good of their country, to endure stomach complaints and forswear privacy in order to remain the "Dearest Friend" of England's new King. In short, George's early letters prove that even his mother could not have been any more infatuated than he was with Lord Bute.

Sarah, unaware of the antagonism she had aroused in the Leicester House coterie, awoke the next morning in happy confidence that Lord Newbottle would win his father's consent to their betrothal. She had scarcely finished her chocolate before a letter came from him, written at his father's and mother's dictation. He lamented "that this must be an end, &c., &c., &c." Woefully disappointed, she cried all the morning. It was very humiliating to find that she had plighted her troth to a backslider, and her blood boiled when she thought how she would have treated a similar parental interference.

When she went downstairs, Mr. Fox reminded her that this was Sunday, February twenty-second, and he no doubt intimated that they all expected that the King would press his suit at the Drawing Room that afternoon.

Sarah went to Court "under the full force of these impressions." Probably it did not comfort her in the least to be told that Lord Newbottle was not worth her devotion. He attracted her, and it hurt her feelings to find he was willing to give her up so easily. Pique can be almost as painful as heart-break when one is very young. She arrived at St. James' Palace "out of humor" with everybody—with Lord Newbottle, with the Foxes—and in no mood to encourage the King.

Ardor and impatience, together with royal self-importance, blinded George. He did not wait to discover her mood. The moment Sarah appeared at the Drawing Room the King went

to her and took her into a recess of one of the large windows.

"Has your friend told you my conversation with her?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, Sir."

"And what do you think of it?"

"Nothing, Sir."

"Nothing comes of nothing!" the King exclaimed impatiently.

Sarah made no reply, but looked as cross as she could look. She succeeded so well that His Majesty was affronted, and left her. And so ended the King's first offer.

Henry Fox was thoroughly exasperated by Sarah's petulant behavior. He lamented that her flirtation with Lord Newbottle should have come "so mal appropos" as to hinder them "perhaps from ever knowing what the King meant." Determined that his hopes should not be endangered by another meeting of the young couple, he and Lady Caroline held council with other members of the family. It was decided to send Sarah to Goodwood, the Duke of Richmond's seat in Sussex.

So, on Monday, February twenty-third, they packed her into a post chaise with a suitable attendant, and such luggage as was necessary for a prolonged stay. The visit must have offered a welcome escape to the sorely tried girl, worn out with reproaches for her sulky demeanor at St. James' and the storm of talk it had caused about her prospects of becoming Queen. No one seemed to understand that the hurt Newbottle had inflicted on her was much more humiliating than the King's pettish outburst. Indeed, the mere thought of running into her fickle suitor at some rout or assembly must have been more than she could bear, whereas at Goodwood she would be removed from both her unsatisfactory admirers, and might enjoy a change of company and conversation.

Mr. Fox's precautions came to nothing. As the chaise bowled along the muddy roads that lay between Kensing-

ton and Goodwood, Lord Newbottle, who was nothing if not romantic, overtook it. One pictures the disconsolate beauty peering curiously from the chaise window at the sound of approaching hoof beats, and withdrawing hastily into the interior as she recognized the horseman who drew rein alongside. Sarah was a natural coquette, and she doubtless affected just that degree of coldness calculated to chasten her fickle adorer. She succeeded; and before they parted Lord Newbottle "unsaid all he had wrote."

Sarah went on her way exulting, and as soon as she reached Goodwood, she dashed off a hasty note: "My dear Susan: I have but just time to tell you that my sister, Caroline, will tell you, if you ask her, what has passed between Lord Newbottle and I upon the road. Adieu, yrs., S. Lennox."

She might have concealed the meeting from her elders, but evidently she sent this note back by the chaise, together with a more complete report to her beloved and trusting elder sister. Sarah was now in a more dutiful mood, for she added in a postscript to Susan, "My brother begs you will go to Court, and let me know what *he* says to you." The brother was the Duke of Richmond, now at Goodwood; "he" undoubtedly refers to George the Third. Sarah's journey had not removed her from the sphere of intrigue. Family interest in the King's ardor was as keen at Goodwood as ever it had been at Holland House, and everyone was eager to learn whether the King missed her. Perhaps the pressure they were bringing to bear on her made her repent of her bad manners and wonder uneasily if he *had* seriously intended to make her his Queen.

Meanwhile, Lord Newbottle, like a true romantic, preferred a love tucked away in the folds of the Sussex downs to a debutante he met everywhere in London. As Goodwood was but a two-day ride from town, Sarah slipped out to meet him on the slopes clad with beechwood that overlooked the spires of Chichester Cathedral and the turrets of Arundel



Castle. In this beautiful setting—on clear days they could see the open Channel and the Isle of Wight—he vowed eternal devotion; and Sarah pretended to herself that they were both very much in love.

Soon Mr. Fox was registering a complaint that "Lady George, in the Duke of Richmond's house, where Lady Sarah was invited to avoid him, carry'd on the love." Someone had informed him that "the jade" was up to her old trick of arranging forbidden trysts for the lovers. When the other members of the family declared they knew about the meetings but could not put a stop to them, it was decided to send Sarah to stay with Lord and Lady Ilchester at Redlynch, near Bruton in Somerset. Sarah made no objection, for Susan was now at home spending the early spring with her parents, and her dearest Sue was infinitely more to her than Lord Newbottle—fascinating as it was to play at love and outwit her elders.

On the old road maps Bruton is shown one hundred and nine miles from London, a distance which a vain, insignificant puppy would not undertake lightly, if not sure of a welcome from his flame or her guardians. The family persuaded themselves that a short stay at Redlynch under Susan's sympathetic but worldly influence would soon put Sarah in a more favorable mind toward her royal suitor. Mr. Fox had no intention of letting Sarah waste valuable time at Redlynch. As soon as he was assured that she had forgotten Lord Newbottle he would bring her back to Holland House to set her cap for the King.

Fate played another turn on Henry Fox. Sarah, like her father before her, loved riding to hounds. One afternoon when she was returning from Longleat "her horse put his foot upon a stone which broke" and Sarah's leg was fractured as he put her down. All those who witnessed the accident, which occurred in the chastely named village of Maiden Bradley, agreed that the pain must have been excruciating;

she was taken in a lurching coach to Mr. Hoare's at Stourton where her leg was set. Yet her bearing during the ordeal made the occasion cheerful, almost pleasurable for those who attended her. Mr. Clark of Bruton, by whom her injury was "very well cur'd," reported that Lady Sarah Lennox was "the most agreeable and merry patient he had ever met with." And the next day, when she was brought to Redlynch "upon men's shoulders in a very pretty bed made for the purpose," Sarah was carried "singing, a great part of the way."

The fine, sixteenth-century mansion of Redlynch was a pleasant place to convalesce in. As she lay in bed, for six long weeks, in one of the spacious rooms that afforded a wide view of the wooded park, Sarah had plenty of company. The house was full of children; the Ilchesters had two boys, Lord Stavordale and Stephen, and a bevy of daughters, Ladies Lucy, Henrietta, Frances, and Harriet, all younger than Sarah's intimate, Lady Susan. Lord Ilchester, accounted one of the best shots in England, cared only for country life and became as good-humored and easygoing as his brother, Henry Fox, when at Redlynch. Sarah was attached to him, and also to Lady Ilchester, whose small, expressive face was so like her daughter Susan's. If the mother lacked the Fox intelligence, the amiability of her disposition made life in her household both serene and agreeable.

Then, as soon as the news of the accident spread, Sarah's family hurried from far and near to her bedside. Mr. Conolly and Lady Louisa, Lord and Lady Kildare, Mr. Fox and Lady Caroline, and the Duke and Duchess of Richmond all came to render sympathy and offer advice. Even her nephew, Charles James Fox, dashed down from London to amuse her, and to catch a glimpse of Susan—for the irrepressible boy already fancied himself in love. No doubt Sarah found his badinage vastly more amusing than the stilted inquiries of the many great and noble neighbors who likewise came to wait upon the invalid and pay their respects.

The family gathering was in the nature of a conspiracy to make her smile on the King. Even the Duke of Richmond had apparently forgotten the recent unpleasantness between him and his sovereign at the latter's accession, when, after a stormy interview with George the Third, the Duke had actually resigned the Bedchamber and retired to the country in dudgeon over an appointment which he had taken as an affront. Now he and his Duchess joined the rest in pointing out to Sarah what a powerful influence a charming Queen could have over a young, good-looking, and amiable monarch whom she had captivated. Such a union, between a daughter of the semi-royal House of Lennox and the first Hanoverian King born in England would be dear to the hearts of his subjects. When Sarah demurred, her family made much of Lord Newbottle's heartless indifference to her suffering and told her of the King's deep concern.

Sarah's recent admirer had laid himself open to the criticism, for when he was told of her accident Lord Newbottle's only remark was an unfeeling jest. "It will do no great harm," he had tittered, "for her legs were ugly enough before." This was adding insult to injury with a vengeance. No one but a cad would say such an odious thing; the insinuation that he had seen more of her legs than he should have was downright insulting, and he had outraged her vanity as well. But when the King heard what had happened to her, Sarah was informed, "he trembled in agony, and had not the impropriety of such a proceeding been strongly urged, he would instantly have set off to visit you." One may be sure that neither report lost in the telling. On the contrary, both were "too probably exaggerated by the arts and officiousness of her friends."

During the long and wearisome confinement, Sarah had ample leisure to compare the ardor of her two admirers. As she pondered, it became clear that "the man for whom she

had refused a crown made a brutal joke of her calamity"; whereas "he who had offered the crown, and whose happiness this refusal had for the time destroyed, was all heart, sorrow, and more attached than ever." These reflections produced the desired effect. "From this moment, Lord Newbottle was no longer thought of, her girlish attachment completely cured." And when Henry Fox paid another flying visit to Redlynch, he found his sister-in-law "as beautiful as ever, and as unmindful of Lord Newbottle."

But most of the time while Sarah lay on her couch discussing her matrimonial prospects with her friends, Henry Fox was dancing attendance at St. James' Palace. He seized every possible opportunity to fan the King's passion by playing on his concern for the invalid. Poor Mr. Fox was not easy in his mind. Each attendance at Court "by many examples prov'd how rightly I had ever called a new reign a new world of which we could know nothing beforehand." And on March twelfth he had been surprised by an event which caused him grave forebodings; "Lord Holderness resign'd the Sec.'s seals which were given to Lord Bute." The King had explained the change in the Cabinet to the Duke of Bedford by saying, "I was resolv'd to have a Secretary"—meaning a Secretary who would serve him no matter how the other members of the Cabinet kicked over the royal traces. But Mr. Fox knew only too well that when George had put himself and his government in the hands of Lord Bute, he would be more than ever under the influence of his mother. The appointment augured ill for Mr. Fox's ambition, since the Princess Dowager of Wales would doubtless oppose her son's inclination to make Lady Sarah Lennox his Queen. In the long run, the mother's influence over her son would depend on a wife of her own choosing, and an English bride had no place in the Princess's schemes, especially one closely related to Henry Fox, who had opposed her regency. Taking these factors into consider-

ation, Mr. Fox had no difficulty in surmising that it had been Lord Bute who had dissuaded the King from going down to Bruton to visit his sister-in-law.

The shrewd old schemer assuaged his anxiety by priming his wife with every detail which might spur Sarah's interest in the King. Lady Caroline, always a tender and devoted guardian, had remained at Redlynch to supervise her sister's convalescence. "The King asked Conolly yesterday a hundred questions about Lady Sarah, wonder'd and was concern'd she should be left to the care of a country surgeon," Mr. Fox wrote to his wife on April seventh. "Conolly told him Hawkins had been sent to, and declar'd there could be no use in his going; that she was very well, very cheerful, &c. H.M., I find, enquired very tenderly." In spite of the King's concern, there was reason for discouragement. "They talk," he continued, "very strongly of a white Princess of Brunswick to be our new Queen, and so strongly that one can hardly help believing it, tho' with no good or particular authority." After enumerating the candidates for the Princess's Maids of Honor, Chamberlain, Master of the Horse, etc., he comforted himself with the thought, "Not one of these conjectures may be true for aught I know." He lashed Lord George Lennox, whom he held responsible for the intrigue furthered by his wife. Indeed, Mr. Fox fairly hated Lord George when he remembered his "unfair and dishonorable proceeding; and exclusive of his timing of it, which was only very unlucky."

Plainly, Mr. Fox feared that the psychological moment for Sarah to become Queen of England had passed. As an old politician he knew that timing is an important element in any delicate negotiation, whether of business, politics, or love. Time had played against his interest. For in the interval of the Newbottle affair, Lord Bute, the favorite of Leicester House, had become Secretary of State. Now, champing with impatience, Mr. Fox was faced with the further delay which nature demanded to knit Sarah's broken leg.

But Henry Fox was a fighter, and on Monday, April thirteenth, he went to Court in his most determined mood. In writing reports of his experiences, Fox, when he chose to, could make his reader feel himself an eyewitness. And on this occasion he chose. What he wrote was obviously meant for Lady Caroline, for it was penned in Mr. Fox's own hand; it was found later among his letters to his wife. Why he addressed her as follows, why he did not sign it, is a matter for conjecture. Possibly, he feared the consequences of being caught plotting a royal marriage and suspected that his mail was being censored, or feared that his messenger might be waylaid.

"To all whom it may concern. On Sunday I heard on good authority that the report of H. M.'s marriage with a Prss. of Brunswick was entirely without foundation, and that he was totally free and unengaged. On Monday, therefore, which was yesterday, I went to Court. I saw the Marqs. of Kildare and Conolly there, to whom I thought His M. had spoke and probably might not speak to me concerning Lady Sal. I determined, however, that he should if I could bring it about."

Mr. Fox managed the business, for the letter continues: "After a loose question or two, he in a 3d, supposes I am by this time settled at Holland House. (Now I have you.)" How Mr. Fox characterizes himself in those four words! And once the King had swallowed the hook, he played him as he would a salmon:

"'I never go there, Sir,' says I, 'there is nobody there.'

"'Where is Lady Caroline?'

"'In Somersetshire with Lady Sarah.' At that name his voice and countenance, gentle and gracious already, softened, & he colored a little.

"'I am very glad to hear she is so well.'

"'As well as anybody can be with such an accident. But the pain was terrible from the motion of the coach till she got to Mr. Hoare's.'

"He drew up his breath, wreath'd himself, and made the countenance of one feeling pain himself. (Thinks I, you shall hear of that again.)

"I added, 'She is extremely cheerful now, & patient and good-humored to a degree.'

"'Was she going down a steep hill when the horse fell?'

"'I believe not, Sir; the horse put his foot upon a stone which broke, & it was impossible he should not fall. Lady Sarah, I hear,' says I, 'proposes to ride to London upon the same course, to clear the horse from all blame.'

"'That shews,' says he, 'a good spirit in Lady Sarah, but I trust there will be prudence in the family to prevent it.'

"'I fancy,' says I, 'Lady Caroline will dissuade it, but indeed the horse was not to blame; in rising again his shoulder press'd Lady Sarah's leg upon the stones, of which that road is full, and broke it.'

"Then across the same countenance, and expressions of uneasiness, which I rather increas'd by talking again of the pain the motion of the coach gave; and then relieved by assuring that she had nothing to bear now but the confinement.

"'I fancy,' says he, 'that is not very easy to Lady Sarah.'

"And then he left me for some conversation which neither gave him so much pain or so much pleasure as mine had done."

Mr. Fox was elated by the interview, for the letter continues: "Don't tell Lady Sarah that *I am sure* he intends to marry her, for I am not *sure* of it. Whether Lady Sarah shall be told what I am sure of, I leave to the reader's judgment. *I am sure* that he loves her better than Lord Newbottle do's. I have shorten'd, not exaggerated a word in this account, and I don't think it was prevention made me imagine something particular whenever he pronounced, especially the last, 'Lady Sarah!'"

Since it was written to whet Sarah's interest, Lady Caroline probably showed the letter to her sister, or at least read

aloud the more affecting parts. In any case, Lady Caroline managed to keep Sarah interested in her royal suitor, because soon Mr. Fox was boasting, "She won't look cross at the King when she sees him next week." But misgiving assailed him as he took stock of the powerful influences that opposed his interest. Would the King "talk as kindly to her?" Mr. Fox asked himself in his Journal: "He has undoubtedly heard of Lord Newbottle and more than is true."

Henry Fox may have had definite knowledge that the King had witnessed Sarah's meeting with Lord Newbottle in the park of Holland House three months before, or that Lord Bute had been informed of the tryst in time to post observers who later told to the King a highly embellished version of what they had seen. But it was probably gossip about their more recent meetings—"on the road," and at Goodwood—that now made him fear that the King might have heard more than was true. In a fright lest Lady George Lennox might yet revive the Newbottle affair, he again warned Lady Caroline against their perfidious sister-in-law: "I wish you will never, or let Lady Sarah (while you have care of her) be alone or have any privacy with her. A jade!"

Such was the tutelage with which Henry Fox—not without inner misgiving—groomed his pretty sister-in-law to catch a crown; and such was the irresistible pressure brought to bear on a malleable young girl lately confined to her bed by a serious accident. Entirely surrounded as she was by a group of people who made it their daily business to repeat stories of the King's devotion calculated to inflame her ambition, it is not surprising that Sarah's natural independence and spirit declined. Were not her advisers—Susan, Caroline, dear Mr. Fox, and all the rest—sincerely interested in her welfare? Were they not more sensible, more experienced in the ways of the world than she? Certainly they had been right concerning Lord Newbottle. Her pride still smarted when she thought of his shabby return for her fondness.



Might they not then be equally right when they assured her that it was not only her duty but her great good fortune to smile on the King?

However much they preached to her about the grandeur of her opportunity, Sarah's immediate concern was to get well. She longed to be up and about, but at each sign of impatience she was exhorted to be quiet, or it would be the longer before she could dance and show her pretty self to advantage. To do just that, to amuse herself again and forget all these hypothetical opportunities was what Sarah, most wanted, perhaps. Yet on May twenty-second, when she was at last able to leave Redlynch and return to Holland House with Lady Caroline, the long, enforced seclusion coupled with the high-pressure tutelage of her friends and family had triumphed. Lady Sarah Lennox returned to Court to set her cap for the King.

## V

### *The Royal Courtship*

ON ARRIVING at Holland House, Sarah doubtless spent the first few days in catching up with the fashions and laying in a fresh supply of beflowered silk gowns, edged petticoats, feathers and furbelows. For nothing gave a girl more self-confidence, she was well aware, than the feeling that her gown was in the very latest mode.

Her first appearance in public was at the playhouse on May twenty-ninth. One pictures her dressing with particular care, for it was rumored that the King might attend the performance. Probably the Foxes—Lady Caroline passing on her appearance before setting out, and Mr. Fox complimenting her on it—were in as great a flutter as she herself.

The King was in the royal box. If Sarah had any misgivings about her power to attract his notice they were soon dissipated. His Majesty “shew’d great pleasure on seeing her.” Separated by the audience, they had no opportunity for conversation, but his eyes, straying again and again from the play to fix themselves on her person, proved that absence had not made her less lovely in his sight.

With an agreeable sense of having pleased her family, simply by looking her best, she prepared to go to Court the following Sunday. But more than that was expected of her today, for George received his courtiers and mingled with them most informally at his Drawing Rooms, which were a

regular Sunday function at St. James'. As Sarah drew near she must have wondered, how would the King greet her?

Again, she was not left long in doubt. "As soon as his eyes found her in the Drawing-room, which he did not expect, he colour'd, & came up to her eager and in haste, & talk'd much and graciously." Watching them discreetly, Mr. Fox exulted. Radiant with renewed success—sweeter now by far than ever it had been before she had risked it—Sarah smiled graciously on the King, and seemed to return his interest.

From this afternoon, Sarah began to like him. Indeed, she would have been most exacting if she had taken an aversion to him; for in his youth George the Third was admittedly personable. Even Horace Walpole, who was not apt "to fall in love with Majesty," called him "the most amiable young man in the world."

For the next three days all the fashionables were busy preening themselves out in new clothes in honor of the King's Birthday Ball, for it was the custom to respect Majesty with a new and magnificent costume. The ball, held on June fourth, the Thursday after the Drawing Room, was excessively brilliant, as befitted the first anniversary of the King's birthday since his accession. Two orchestras hidden behind a decoration of painted clouds played together, and as the music floated down in perfect unison from the galleries, the courtiers, resplendent in jewels and gold and silver lace, glided across the polished floor. "The Birthday," Horace Walpole wrote the Countess of Ailesbury, "exceeded the splendour of Haroun Alraschid and the Arabian Nights, when people had nothing to do but to scour a lantern and send a genie for a hamper of diamonds and rubies." He could not describe the Birthday without remembering Sarah, and when he thought of her a poetic fervor animated his pen. "Do you remember one of those stories," he went on, "where a prince has eight statues of diamonds, which he overlooks, because he fancies he wants a ninth; and to his great surprise the

ninth proves to be pure flesh and blood, which he never thought of? Somehow or other, Lady Sarah is the ninth statue; and you will allow, has better white and red than if she was made of pearls and rubies."

The hypocritical old courtier was not alone in his admiration of Lady Sarah Lennox that night. She reigned before all the Court as the Queen of George's heart. The sight of her again after a separation of so many months had fanned his passion and, casting aside all polite pretence, he gave himself up to the delight of devoting himself to her. Her "place was, of course, at the head of the dancer's bench, nearest his seat. Lo! the royal chair, heavy as it was, moved by degrees more and more to the left, and he who sate there-on edged and edged farther the same way, and the conversation went on till all dancing was over, and everybody sate in suspense, and it approached one in the morning ere he recollected himself and rose to dismiss the assembly."

This account of Sarah's triumph, of how George forgot himself and behaved as would any other young man in love, is all the more arresting because it was related by a prominent member of the enemy camp—none other than Lord Bute's daughter, Lady Macartney, to a younger sister, Lady Louisa Stuart, who was still in the nursery, and who wrote it down later as something "which I have often heard Lady Macartney describe."

Lady Susan Fox-Strangways was jubilant, and she declared afterwards, "I almost thought myself Prime Minister—for some time after the first Birthday Ball." She explained that Sarah's newly mended leg kept her from dancing, and that was why she sat "near His Majesty's chair." But that was not the reason why the King "had neither eyes nor ears for any other object."

As Mr. Fox rubbed his hands over the success of his coaching, he came to regard Sarah as an arch pupil who had lost herself in the spirit of the game. "At the Birthday Ball he

(the King) had no eyes but for her, and hardly talked to anybody else. He brought her (by leaning forward and stooping often) to come forward & stand by the side of his fauteuil: all eyes were fix'd on them, & the next morning all tongues observing on the particularity of his behaviour, if it can be thought particular that a young King should not be able to avoid shewing the strongest symptoms of love & of desire for the prettiest creature in the world; for, if possible, she look'd prettier that night than ever. Her Ladyship, with modesty very natural to her, and yet with looks as unaffected, returned the fondness of his eyes & gallantry of his discourse as much as ever he could wish. He is in love with her, and it is no less certain that she loves him; and if she now ever thinks of Newbottle it is to vex and hate herself for the foolish transaction I before related."

Mr. Fox's wish that Sarah should become Queen made him jump to the conclusion that because she encouraged the King she had suddenly fallen in love with him. He failed to see that this new and dazzling conquest provided the balm for her pride which had been so sorely humiliated by Newbottle. She played up to her royal suitor as she would have done to any other man in similar circumstances, but with the added satisfaction of knowing that her conduct was more than pleasing to her family. One gathers that Sarah was not averse to becoming Queen, if such was her destiny. But that, as yet, seemed a remote possibility. And although everyone in those days was dazzled by princes and was likely to blink in the presence of the royal radiance, still there was royal blood in Sarah's own veins, and a Lennox did not tremble or brood because a king looked at her. An instinctive and clever flirt, Sarah, as would any other girl of spirit, was merely enjoying her unparalleled success.

"It were impossible to write down so much discourse as the King held with her," Mr. Fox lamented in his Journal. But he was determined to do the best he could, prefacing his

final report of the Birthday Ball with the remark that their words had not been "so remarkable as the *langage des yeux*."

Among other things which the King and Sarah had touched on, the King had desired his sister to dance "Betty Blue."

"'A dance, Madam,' says he to Lady Sarah, 'that you are acquainted with. I am very fond of it because it was taught me by a lady'—looking very significantly."

Sarah, like the flirt she was, "really did not know whom he meant."

"'A very pretty lady,' says he, 'that came from Ireland November was a twelvemonth.'"

"She then knew, but did not pretend to know."

"'I am talking to her now,' says he, 'she taught me the ball on Twelve Night.'"

"'Indeed, Sir,' says she, 'I did not remember it.'"

"'That may be,' says he, 'but I have a very good memory for whatever concerns that lady. I had got a pretty new country dance of my own for the late King's Birthday, if he had liv'd to it, & I nam'd it, The Twenty-Fifth of February.'" (Lady Sarah's birthday in the New Style Year.\*)

To Mr. Fox's delight, Sarah "colour'd, & in this *pretty* way did these two lovers entertain one another & the eyes of the whole ball room for an hour. He stopp'd very remarkably as he was going, and turn'd & spoke again & again, as if he could not force himself from her."

This entry in the Journal reads as if Mr. Fox had been hovering near the King's fauteuil much as the King leaned toward Sarah. How else could he have overheard so much of their conversation? But it is evident that the astute old man must have been blinded by his hopes if he fancied that Sarah's heart was touched. Obviously, she was concealing her

\* In 1751 an Act of Parliament was passed "for regulating the Commencement of the Year and for correcting the Calendar." Eleven days were omitted from the calendar then in use, and the Commencement of the Year hitherto held on March twenty-fifth—the Feast of the Annunciation—was moved back to January first.

amusement lest she discourage the King from making a definite proposal. For, much as she enjoyed her triumph at the Birthday Ball, George the Third did not draw her mettle.

Hostile eyes had been observing Sarah, too, during the long evening. The Princess Dowager of Wales had not been blind to "these whispers and dialogues" between her son and Lady Sarah. Three days later, when Sarah went to Court again glowing with her recent triumph, the King "look'd out of sorts and melancholy, said nothing to her but what he might not have said to any other young lady, look'd languishing, & as if he lov'd her, talk'd a great while to her, and with great favour and civility to Lady Caroline & Lady Susan, but there were not those ardent looks of fondness, or any particular expressions to Lady Sarah." In other words, the King was behaving like any other mother-ridden young suitor, and in hostile company tried to conceal his ardor for his beloved.

In her zeal to break off her son's attachment, the Princess passed the limits of good manners; she "instructed Lady Bute to endeavor to place herself in the circle" whenever the King sought to make advances to Lady Sarah. Not content with this, the Princess on one occasion actually "marked her observation of what was going on to Lady Sarah herself, laughing in her face & trying to affront her."

Troubled by the King's discretion, Mr. Fox consoled himself with the reflection, "The Ladys say he has been tutor'd." His own ladies tutored Mr. Fox, reminded him that what made Sarah so distasteful to the Princess of Wales was her being under his tutelage. Lady Caroline may have pointed out that it might be politic to withdraw from the scene, for he went to the Isle of Thanet for a week's bathing and rest. Before Mr. Fox left, he intimated that if the weather continued fine Lady Sarah should help the haymakers in the meadows south of the house, close by the Great Road which the King was in the habit of taking on his early morning ride. Perhaps the hayfield, far removed from his mother and her

tabby cats, might be just the spot the royal suitor might choose to declare his love.

The next few mornings found Sarah "in a fancied habit making hay." The plain, full skirt, and bodice laced with bright ribbons, became her slender-waisted yet rounded figure, and the vigorous exercise heightened the color in her cheeks and lips, in dazzling contrast to the whiteness of her arms and neck half veiled beneath a plain fichu. With her glossy dark hair escaping in curls from beneath a gipsy hat, she made a pretty picture as she half worked, half toyed with the hay—or so George seemed to think. For each morning, as he rode along the Great Road, he drew rein, dismounted, and came and stood by her. But Fox's hopes went unfulfilled. The King was apparently either unwilling or unable to play Strephon to Sarah's charming Phyllis, and his pastoral ardor did not carry him much beyond a few remarks on the weather or the quality of the hay. As he turned to ride away he tried to look the regretful suitor, but it is difficult to imagine that the china-blue eyes of the Hanoverians could have expressed much passion.

Yet these casual, informal meetings fanned the flame, and when Sarah went to Court again the King forgot to be restrained. She was chaperoned to the Drawing Room on Thursday, June eighteenth, by Lady Kildare, who had been admonished by Mr. Fox to keep her eyes and ears open.

As soon as the King saw Sarah he said: "I was told you were to go out of town. If you had gone I should have been miserable." Then he added, "For God's sake, think of what I said to Lady Susan Strangways before you went to the country."

Sarah was confused, for he both "look'd and was exceedingly fond," and he spoke quite loud as if he did not care who heard him.

Before she could reply he repeated with great seriousness and an almost desperate fervor, "For God's sake, remember



what I said to Lady Susan before you went to the country, and believe I have the strongest attachment."

Sarah murmured something inaudible—or unrecorded. Perhaps she was too overcome by the publicity of the declaration to do more than curtsy with downcast eyes. Yet what could she have answered? This proposal was as ambiguous as the first one, and singularly repetitious. Why couldn't the King declare himself in plain English without hiding behind Susan's skirts?

Mr. Fox, however, was jubilant. "When Lady Kildare wrote us this," he confessed, "I imagined he must intend to go further . . ." His opinion was shared by everyone who had overheard the King, and soon the courtiers assumed that Lady Sarah Lennox was to become Queen. So much so, that Lady Barrington, a friend of Sarah's, who was remarkable for having a very beautiful shaped back, and was proud of it, pulled her aside one day as they entered the presence chamber together.

"Do, my dear Lady Sarah, let me take the lead and go in before you just this once," Lady Barrington begged, "for you will never have another opportunity of seeing my beautiful back!"

Flattered now by all the fashionables, as well as her own family, into the belief that the King intended to make her his Queen, Sarah herself was not yet certain of it. In a letter to Susan, who had returned to Redlynch, she tells how carefully she was tutored for her next appearance at Court, and betrays an inner misgiving that she might be cast for a lesser role, if the King so desired.

"After many pros and cons it is determined I go to-morrow," she wrote Susan, "and that I must pluck up my spirits, and if I am asked if I have thought of . . . or approve, to look . . . in the face, and with an earnest but goodhumored countenance say that, 'I don't know what I ought to think.'"

"If the meaning is explained, I must say, 'that I can hardly believe it,'—and so forth. If, instead of that, you should be named, I shall say that you were so much confounded and astonished that I believe you did not understand the meaning.

"If the answer is—'I hope you do understand'—I shall say, 'that the more I think of it, the less I understand it.' (I hope that won't be too forward.)

"In short, I must show I wish it to be explained, without seeming to suspect any *other* meaning. What a task it is! God send that I may be able to go thro' with it.

"I am allowed to mutter a little, provided the words *astonished*, *surprised*, *understand*, and *meaning*, are heard.

"I am working myself up to consider what depends upon it, that I may *me fortifier* against it comes—the very thought of it makes me sick in my stomach already. I shall be proud as the devil but no matter . . ."

Nothing could be clearer than that Sarah was bewildered, but no one in her family could find fault with her for that. Even Mr. Fox was puzzled about the exact meaning of the King's outburst; for George was not a convincing lover and his way of wooing was apparently to repeat the ambiguities which had puzzled everyone when he had first uttered them.

Sarah's confession—that the approaching interview "makes me sick in my stomach already"—cuts like a knife through the layers of unhealthy intrigue promoted by Mr. Fox. It proves that she was not in love with the King, and that even the prospect of becoming Queen could not console her for giving her heart to a man she did not love. She was prepared to be "as proud as the devil"—but lovers do not reckon their pride before a crucial interview with their beloved. And if the coming interview took an unexpected turn—as Sarah plainly suspected that it might—she had reason indeed to be worked up. One suspects that she was secretly fortifying herself against a fear that the King might want her to become

his mistress. That would be a blow to her pride, but not necessarily to Mr. Fox's ambition.

In this mood Sarah went to Court on Sunday, June twenty-first; and nothing happened. "Well, today is come to nothing," she reported to Susan, "for we were so near your namesake and her mistress (Lady Susan Stuart and Princess Augusta) that nothing could be said, and they wacht us as a cat does a mouse, but looks & smiles very very gracious; however I go with the Duchess [of Richmond] Thursday. I'll put a postscript in this of it. I beg you won't shew this to anybody, so pray burn it, for I can tell you things that I can't other people you know. Adieu, Dear Suke. Yrs., S. Lennox."

It was cruel not to learn her fate after so much suspense. Worse still, the family gave her no respite. The Foxes held further conclaves to contrive ways to have Sarah meet the King when he was not chaperoned by his mother or his sister, and so Sarah had to add a postscript to her long letter. "My love (if I may so say) to Ld & Ly Ilchester, and compliments to the rest. Pray desire Lord Ilchester to send my mare immediately, if he don't want it, for I must ride once at least immediately in Richmond Park. Much depends on it." Surely there must have been other suitable mounts at Holland House! But perhaps Sarah was beginning to rebel against so much futile tutoring; perhaps she pouted and said that she would not ride out to meet the King unless it was upon her own mare. At any rate, her "much depends on it" shows how great was the suspense among the Holland House coterie at this time.

Their anxiety had ever-increasing cause. On Friday, June twenty-sixth, Sarah wound up her letter in a burst of open rebellion: "P.S. I went Thursday but nothing was said; I won't go jiggitting forever if I hear nothing I can tell him." And from this time on the tone of her letters implies that she would allow herself to be pushed up to a certain point

and no further. She was not in the least depressed; she was just growing impatient with Mr. Fox's campaign to make her Queen. She would have felt despair—not impatience—if George had captured her heart.

Meanwhile Mr. Fox was trying to put an encouraging interpretation on her unsatisfactory reception at Court on June twenty-first and twenty-fifth. "Lady Sarah went the next, & the next Drawing-room," he wrote in his Journal. "He spoke & look'd with great fondness, but said nothing in particular." But at their next meeting Fox derived what meager comfort he could from the tender love light in George's china-blue eyes: "On Sunday, June twenty-eighth, he fix'd his eyes & hardly took them off from her all church time." In the Chapel Royal, St. James, the peers sat below; the women apart in the galleries. The King and the royal family occupied the royal pew across the west end, above. That the monarch, himself the target of all eyes, should have been unable to wrest his own from the face of the beautiful girl he loved must have caused a flutter among the congregation.

Since the day had begun so propitiously, it seems strange that Sarah was not taken to the Drawing Room that afternoon. Why did not Mr. Fox insist on her pursuing the quarry? Perhaps he tried to, and perhaps Sarah tossed her pretty head and refused "to go jiggitting" again. But he overcame her reluctance in a day or two, for on "Thursday, July second, Lady Caroline went, & Lady Sarah with her. Lady Augusta and her Lady of Bedchamber, Lady Susan Stuart, & Lady Bute watch'd the King impertinently & indecently, who spoke to Lady Sarah but said nothing in particular."

Mr. Fox's hatred of his enemies was beginning to boil over. The truth was that triumph made them bold. They knew what Henry Fox was not to know until two days later, July fourth. As yet he knew only that the Council had been summoned to meet July eighth. Although a member of it he was kept in the dark as to its purpose, for he was writing to

Lord Waldegrave: "The secret is most ridiculously kept. Nor will those that know tell me a word, or even give a hint of it." Then on Saturday, July fourth, the secret was rumored—and what a shock it was to Mr. Fox!

"How we were surprised to know on Saturday from Woburn, that the Council summon'd on Wednesday, July first, to meet on the eighth upon urgent and important business was to hear H.M. declare his intended marriage with Miss Charlotte of Mecklenburgh! This must have been settled with his consent long before Thursday, June eighteenth"—the day when George had proclaimed his strong attachment for Sarah before his Court. Remembering that, Fox's indignation rose. "What could he mean by it?" he fumed. "Is it to be accounted for, and made consistent with honesty, good nature, or common sense?" In a letter to his brother written on July seventh he proclaimed himself aghast at the monarch's duplicity: "If my intelligence concerning it is true, it must have been fixed when the conversation reported to you happened. Is that possible?"

Yes, it was possible. Early in June, Colonel David Graeme had been dispatched by Lord Bute to Strelitz with a letter from the Princess Dowager of Wales to the Duchess of Mecklenburg intimating a proposal from her son, George the Third, for the hand of Princess Charlotte. Colonel Graeme had arrived at Strelitz on June fourteenth, and he had forwarded the Duchess's answer—which was, of course, an acceptance—to the Princess Dowager on June seventeenth. By the end of June the alliance had been made to the satisfaction of both parties, and George was declaring to Lord Bute that he wished "to have it immediately concluded."

Why then, had the King been so ardent in his bearing toward Sarah ever since her return from Redlynch at the end of May? And what strange passion was concealed behind those child-like blue eyes? What *olla podrida* of hope and despair had been seething and bubbling in that ingen-

uous German bosom? Fortunately for the perplexed biographer of Lady Sarah, the letters George wrote to Lord Bute have recently been published,\* and one can trace the cause of this peculiar emotional tangle from the royal point of view as well. A year and a half earlier, just after Sarah's return to Holland House, George, then Prince of Wales, had unbosomed himself, as usual, to Lord Bute. Three letters, dated "Winter of 1759-60," prove beyond doubt that Lady Sarah Lennox had already won the love of the young Prince, and that the Leicester House faction had been quick to oppose the match. They also reveal the docility, ingenuousness, and passion of the young Prince.

"You have often accused me of growing grave and thoughtful," he told Bute, "it is entirely owing to a daily increasing admiration of the fair sex, which I am attempting with all the philosophy and resolution I am capable of to keep under. I should be asham'd after having so long resisted the charms of those divine creatures now to become their prey; Princes when once in their hands make miserable figures, the annals of France and the present situation of Government in the Kingdom I the most love, are convincing proofs of it; when I have said this you will plainly feel how strong a struggle there is between the boiling youth of twenty-one years and prudence; the last I hope will ever keep the upper hand, indeed if I can weather it, but a few years, marriage will put a stop to this combat in my breast; I believe you will agree with me that application is the only aid I can give to reason, that by keeping the mind constantly employ'd is a likely means of preserving those passions in due subordination to it; believe me I will with the greatest assiduity attempt to make all that progress which your good counsels, if properly attended to have reason to expect."

This outburst on the temptations of young manhood in

\* *The Letters of George the Third to Lord Bute*, edited by Mr. Romney Sedgwick: Macmillan & Co., London, 1939.

general was obviously inspired by woman in the particular. As Lord Bute enjoyed the young Prince's confidence to a remarkable degree, he had only to make a sympathetic reply to learn the lady's name. He seems to have done so, for the Prince wrote him again. "What I now lay before you I never intend to communicate to anyone; the truth is the D. of Richmond's sister arriv'd from Ireland towards the middle of Novr., I was struck with her first appearance at St. James's, my passion has been increas'd every time I have since beheld her; her voice is sweet she seems sensible has a thorough sense of her obligations to her sister Lady Kildare, in short she is every thing I can form to myself lovely. I am daily grown unhappy, sleep has left me, which never was before interrupted by any reverse of fortune; I protest before God I never had any improper thought with regard to her; I don't deny having often flatter'd myself with hopes that one day or other you would consent to my raising her to a Throne; thus I mince nothing to you; the other day I heard it suggested as if the D. of Marlborough made up to her. I shift'd my grief till retired to my chamber where I remained for several hours in the depths of despair, I believe this was said without foundation at least I will flatter myself so. Having now laid the whole before you I submit my happiness to you who are the best of friends, whose friendship I value if possible above my love for the most charming of her sex; if you can give me no hopes how to be happy I surrender my fortune into your hands, and will keep my thoughts even from the dear object of my love, grieve in silence, and never trouble you more with this unhappy tale; for if I must either lose my friend or my love, I will give up the latter, for I esteem your friendship above every earthly joy; if on the contrary you can devise any method for my keeping my love without forfeiting your friendship, I shall be more bound to you than ever, and I shall thank Heaven for the thought of writing to you on this subject. On the whole let me preserve

your friendship, and tho' my heart should break, I shall have the happy reflection in dying that I have not been altogether unworthy of the best of friends tho' unfortunate in other things. Pray let me have a line from you tonight."

There is something altogether pathetic about this relation, in which infatuated friendship struggles with love, dull dutifulness with desire, sincerity with timidity; yet it is somehow more moving than the accounts of those, including Sarah herself, who observed the Prince's behavior. And one is moved almost to indignation by the reply of Lord Bute, with its pompous phrases of self-sacrifice: "My Dear Prince's kind confidential letter is of too great consequence to return an immediate answer; not but God knows, my dear Sir, I with the utmost grief tell it you, the case admits not of the smallest doubt; however I will carry your letter with me to the country, weigh every circumstance, and then like an honest man, a most devoted servant, and a faithful friend, lay the whole before you; think Sir in the meantime, who you are, what is your birth right, what you wish to be, and prepare your mind with a resolution to hear the voice of truth, for such alone shall come from me, however painful the office, duty and friendship and a thousand other ties, commands me, and I will obey tho' death looked me in the face."

Lord Bute must have followed up this epistle with a long talk the next day, for the Prince wrote him: "As I do not imagine I shall have the pleasure of seeing my Dearest Friend tonight, I take this method of most earnestly thanking him, for his good advice on Thursday: I have now more obligations to him than ever before; he has thoroughly convinced me of the impropriety of marrying a country woman; the interest of my country ever shall be first in my care, my own inclinations shall ever submit to it; I am born for the happiness or misery of a great nation, and consequently must often act contrary to my passions; I will by every method attempt to render the thoughts of marriage less disagreeable to me, as



it must sooner or later come to pass; I should wish we could next summer by some method or other get some account of the various Princesses in Germany, that binds me to nothing, and would save a great deal of trouble when ever I consent to enter into those bonds; I thought the just setting down my resolution never to marry an English woman would please my Dearest Friend, and convince him his honest intentions the other night have not been without effect."

The most interesting fact about these letters is the date—"Winter of 1759-60." They were written, then, about a year before George's perplexing conversation with Lady Susan, when he said that none seemed so fit to be his Queen as her friend. It becomes perfectly clear, as one reads these letters, why the King had been so ambiguous in his courting. He had pledged his word to his tutor—now about to become his Secretary—that he would not marry a countrywoman. Yet when he beheld Sarah, the love he had struggled against for more than a year overcame him and he confided to a sympathetic ear his longing to make her his Queen.

In spite of his love the King had never wavered in his decision to submit his happiness to his "Dearest Friend." At the very time when his addresses to Sarah first became pointed, he dutifully spent many evenings with his mother looking up the eligible German Princesses; and in January, 1761, preliminary inquiries about a suitable wife for him were already begun through P. A. von Munchausen, the Hanoverian Minister in London, and his brother, C. A. von Munchausen, in Hanover. Indeed, he and his mother were anxiously awaiting a report from Hanover on the Princess of Schwedt! In the light of these facts, it is clear that Mr. Fox's ambition had made him interpret the King's lovesick glances at Sarah—and his muttered confidences in regard to her—too hopefully. Sarah herself, it should be remembered, had not taken the King's remarks seriously. Indeed, she had told him to his face that she thought nothing of them; and she

doubtless would have forgotten all about them had not Mr. Fox's maneuvers and a fickle lover's desertion put her in a mood to play up to the King.

The inquiries for a suitable German-born Queen had continued while Sarah was at Redlynch recovering from her accident. In March, a Princess of Darmstadt had been struck off the lists because her mother had "told very lately that she is stubborn and ill temper'd to the greatest degree." And just before Sarah's return to Holland House the choice had dwindled to two or three; and then on May twentieth the King wrote Lord Bute, "I am resolv'd to fix it here"—on the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. According to the reports of Schulenburg, another royal scout, the Princess was not an accomplished person, not exactly a beauty, and not really distinguished in appearance. But she was said to be amiable and unspoiled. George the Third owed to Lord Bute that Princess Charlotte was "not in every particular as I could wish." But he wanted to be married and so he agreed to it—and then Sarah had returned to Court.

From the evening of May twenty-ninth, when he first saw her again in the playhouse, until the meeting of the Council on July eighth, the young King was distraught. He had committed himself to marry a plain woman whom he had never seen, but whenever he held Court he saw the beautiful girl he loved. He could not ask her, now, to be his Queen, but he could not help trying to make her understand that he still thought "none so fit" to be his consort as she. Being neither very bright nor very sensitive, George perhaps did not realize his duplicity toward Lady Sarah. Yet on the eve of escaping from his false position he showed visible signs of relief.

Mr. Fox carried his son, Stephen, to Court the evening of July seventh. To his astonishment, "The King was civil in the highest degree imaginable. I never saw H.M. or any man look so cheerful, so goodnatured, so honest, so happy as he

did." How could the King display such high spirits in the very act of jilting the woman he loved? Mr. Fox studied the royal countenance for an explanation—and found none. For he did not know, of course, that the King had renounced Sarah from the very beginning of his attachment; that George was experiencing the deep relief which comes from facing a situation honestly. On the morrow the ambiguity which had surrounded his courtship of Lady Sarah Lennox would be dissipated, and the whole world would know exactly where he stood.

How did Sarah feel when the rumor leaked out? On the eve of the meeting of the Council, at the moment when her expectation of becoming Queen was blasted, she sat down and wrote Susan all her thoughts and feelings. Her letter, rated by Sir George Otto Trevelyan "the most charming of all documents which bear upon English history," shows that the girl who was about to be jilted was not deceived, or deceiving herself in the least:

"Holland House, July 7, 1761.

"My dearest Susan: I return you Tony Martin [probably a horse] in perfect health, I hope. I take the opportunity of writing by him, as I think this should not be trusted to the post. To begin to astonish you as much as I was, I must tell you that the ——— is going to be married to a Princess Mecklenburg, & that I am sure of it. There is a Council tomorrow on purpose, the orders for it are *urgent & important* business; does not your chollar rise at hearing this; but you think I daresay that I have been doing some terrible thing to deserve it, for you won't be brought to change so totally your opinion of any person; but I assure you I have not. I have been very often since I wrote last, but tho' nothing was said, he always took pains to shew me some preference by talking twice, and mighty kind speeches and looks; even last

Thursday, the day after the orders were come out, the hypocrite had the face to come up & speak to me with all the good humour in the world & seemed to want to speak to me but was afraid. There is something so astonishing in this that I can hardly believe, but yet Mr. Fox knows it to be true; I cannot help wishing to-morrow over, tho' I can expect nothing from it. He must have sent to this woman before you went out of town; then what business had he to begin again? In short, his behaviour is that of a man who has neither *sense*, *good nature*, nor *honesty*. I shall go Thursday sen-night; I shall take care to shew that I am not mortified to anybody, but if it is true that one can vex anybody with a reserved, cold manner, he shall have it I promise him.

"Now as to what I think about it as to myself, excepting this little revenge, I have almost forgiven him; luckily for me I did not love him, & only liked him, nor did the title weigh anything with me; so little at least, that my disappointment did not *affect* my spirits above one hour or two I believe.

"I did not cry I assure you, which I believe you will, as I know you were more set upon it than I was. The thing I am most angry at, is looking so like a fool, as I shall for having gone so often for nothing, but I don't much care; if he was to change his mind again (which can't be tho'), & not give me a *very* good reason for his conduct, I would not have him, for if he is so weak as to be govern'd by everybody, I shall have but a bad time of it. Now I charge you, dear Lady Sue, not to mention this to anybody but Ld and Ly Ilchester, & desire them not to speak of it to any mortal, for it will be said we invent storries, & he will hate us all anyway, for one generally hates people that one is in the wrong with and that knows one has acted wrong, particularly if they speak of it, and it might do a great deal of harm to all the rest of the family, & do me no good. So pray remember this, for a secret among many people is very bad and I must tell it some.

"Ste. is come; he is very much improved, but looks as he did only taller & thinner.

"My love & compts to every body at Redlinch.

"Adieu, dear Susan. Yours sincerely,

"S. Lennox.

"We are to act a play, and have a little ball; I wish you were here to enjoy them, but they are forwarded for Ste., & to shew that we are not so melancholy quite.

"I have taken a fancy to Lord Litchfield for looking shocked to see Lady A. [Princess Augusta, sister of George the Third] & Lady S.S. [Susan Stuart, one of her ladies] burst out laughing in my face to put me out when the former's brother was speaking to me last time."

How eager Sarah was to show the world that the jilting had not affected her spirits! Yet she proved her mettle in taking the setback as she did—for gaiety in disappointment demands courage. Indeed, every word of Sarah's letter shows her sense, good nature, and honesty—the very qualities she missed in the King.

Although Sarah would have made a lovely Queen, one worthy to occupy the throne of Anne and Mary of Orange, it was just as well for her that George the Third did not win her. On her own authority, we know she did not love him, but only liked him. And her confession does not smack of sour grapes because her whole response to his lovemaking corroborates it. She defined the exact nature and extent of her disappointment—"looking so like a fool . . . for having gone so often for nothing." Any girl of spirit would feel the same in similar circumstances, but her remarks about injurers and their victims betray a perspicacity rarely found in a sixteen-year-old. And in the clever way in which Sarah parries any future reproaches from Susan, one sees the implication that her dearest Suke had a streak of her father's positiveness.

The members of the Privy Council met at St. James' on July eighth: "The King was pleased to make a most gracious declaration of his having chosen for his consort the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and likewise to appoint Tuesday the 22'd day of September next, for solemnizing the Coronation." Whereupon, all those present requested the King that his declaration to them might be made public; which His Majesty was pleased to order accordingly.

Mr. Fox was a member of the Council, and therefore an eyewitness—and his eye was on the King. He noted that the monarch "seem'd confused when he made his Declaration in Council, and more so as he came by me in going away; a remark which Lord Albemarle & Lord Waldegrave made before I own'd I had made the same. But he has since behaved to us all with the greatest ease except to the person most concerned." Such confessions reveal what a wily old schemer Mr. Fox was. He felt outraged on Sarah's account, yet he was keener than ever to stand high in the King's favor because he still had hopes of obtaining a peerage. But to Lord Ilchester his resentment broke into sarcasm: "I ask'd, is that possible? You'll see it was. He (the King) was ashamed, and well he might. The Coronation is fix'd for Sept. 22'd. It will save the lifes or at least prolong the lifes of a great many partridges." In spite of his own disappointment, Mr. Fox kept an anxious eye on Sarah. He was eager to save her from all unnecessary humiliation; on the fourteenth he was writing his brother: "On Thursday the lady goes to Court again; the prudent will have it so. Why should not she be and own she is very angry, and stay away?" As if to console himself for petticoat rule he added: "But she goes for once only, and will look very proud. The Q.'s mother is dead (of surprise, I believe), and that delays the Wedding a little, but not the Coronation."

No matter how much the prudent may have insisted, Sarah would not have gone to Court again unless she had wanted

to. The truth was that she was boiling for an opportunity to snub the King; and afterwards she sat down and wrote Susan how much she had relished the experience:

“July 16, 1761.

“I went this morning for the first time. He looked frightened when he saw me, but notwithstanding came up, with what countenance I don’t know, for I was not so gracious as even to look at him; when he spoke, our conversation was short, here it is.

“‘I see riding is begun again, it’s glorious weather for it now.’

“*Answer:* ‘Yes; it is very fine’—add to that a very cross and angry look of my side and his turning away immediately, and you know the whole.

“The sister [Princess Augusta] would be so fond of my sister and I, nothing ever was like it, *mais je la traitai du haut en bas*, and would not let the young woman cavil so much; our friend pitied me vastly, and called me poor Lady S. to Elizabeth, but I shewed him today I was not so much dejected with my misfortune; as for your friend Billy [the King’s brother, the Duke of Gloucester], he has not dared to shew his face since, poor thing.”

Sarah then went on to tell what she had heard about the Royal Wedding. The ceremony was to be private, “but the Drawing Room after is the day to come in a fine gown.” Unless Susan had already made plans to return to Court, Sarah advised her not to hurry herself; there would be plenty of time for civility later. “I long to see you tho’,” she added wistfully. Sarah was beginning to wonder whether they would name her for train-bearer. “I wish they would,” she confessed, “tho’ they abuse me and call me names, for I think it is the best way of seeing the Coronation.” It is impossible to believe that Sarah was either depressed or

humiliated when she showed such delightful curiosity about the very occasion which was supposed to be breaking her heart. And on the very same day Mr. Fox was writing his brother: "Lady Sarah's mare is lame and her squirrel ill. These two misfortunes do really vex her. The other sat very lightly upon her indeed."

As July drew to a close, George the Third, who even in his most ardent moments resembled an overgrown school boy, lived up to his reputation by contracting, on the announcement of his marriage, a bad case of chicken pox. And Mr. Fox was fretting because he had heard that no peerages were to be given till late in the end of the next Sessions. He was concerned about Sarah, now, because the sick squirrel was dead—"& which is worse, the pretty horse, Beau. Lady Sarah to comfort her has a young hedgehog which breakfasted with us today. She bought it yesterday & continues to kiss it very much." Apparently Sarah could handle this strange pet with the barbed quills more successfully than the slippery creatures at Court.

In spite of her absorption in her little menagerie, Sarah must have been exceedingly bored. The season was over, and all the fashionables had gone to the country. "London is a desert," Horace Walpole was complaining, "no soul in it but the King." Of the King, Sarah wished to see or hear nothing more, but it was impossible not to think about the Royal Wedding and Coronation. Speculations about those two events were rife. Already the *London Chronicle* had printed a piece about the House of Mecklenburg, and in an August issue the same journal continued its publicity campaign for the future Queen with a private letter containing a personal description of the Princess Sophia Charlotte. "She is of middling size," a lady at Strelitz reported, "but rather inclines to tall; has a fine shape, graceful carriage, fine neck and hands, brown hair, round face, blue eyes full of sweet-



ness, mouth rather large, rosy lips, and extreme fine teeth which appear when she speaks or laughs; she dances well, hath a very gracious and engaging air, a youthful look, her temper excellent, without the least tincture of pride!"

She will need to be gracious and engaging, Sarah may have said to herself on reading this highly flattering account of a rival who everyone agreed was quite plain. But she kept such thoughts to herself—content, perhaps, to smile in the looking-glass. Decidedly, it was a satisfaction to a girl who had just been jilted to know that she was beautiful. Good looks helped one to carry one's head high and appear unconcerned.

Sarah's ordeal was intensified during August. For when the gossips were not chattering about the future Queen, the Royal Wedding and the Coronation, their tongues wagged about the King's treatment of her. Sarah had counseled Susan to a policy of silence, believing that if her friends and family abused the King it might do them much harm, and her no good. She kept firmly to her principle now. Her lips were sealed, no matter what her enemies were saying about her. Quite different were the tactics of Lord Bute's friends, who circulated stories to the effect that the King had only intended to make Sarah his mistress.

The written testimony in support of the Bute contention is discussed in "Lady Louisa Stuart's notes on Jesse's George Selwyn." A passage in Jesse which concerns Lady Sarah, "so celebrated for her surpassing loveliness and her delightful fascination of manner . . ." is quite definite on this point: "That George the Third did not desire to make Lady Sarah his wife was not exactly the fact." And he adds that had the King "thought proper to consult only his own wishes, he would gladly have raised her to the throne . . ." Commenting on this passage Lady Louisa says: "My mother who knew with certainty whatever was then passing has often

assured me that no thought of marrying her ever once came into his head, but in love with her he assuredly was and if she had played her cards well, there is no knowing what influence she might have gained over him. Too young to be ambitious, she did not play them at all." Of Lady Louisa's extreme partisanship there can be no doubt, since Lady Bute who told her this interesting gossip was her mother and probably asserted as a fact whatever she chose to believe.

The second piece of written testimony is equally partisan—but in behalf of Sarah. In concluding his Memoir of his mother, Sarah's son, Henry Napier, discusses the behavior of George at length, and then adds: "But had he not been naturally inclined to dissimulation, he would have conducted himself with frankness, which he so much and justly admired in my mother who was open as day, and from the first have told her all his difficulties. This, although a great one, was his only fault, for during his whole acquaintance with her, he never uttered a syllable which could be construed into the most distant hint or obscurest signification of anything but the most honourable and disinterested intentions, and the most delicate of sentiments; on the contrary, he once gave a severe rebuke to one of his courtiers for urging him to a contrary proceeding." Napier adds that although his mother knew the name "of this unworthy parasite," she never divulged it. "The secret went with her to the grave."

A third discussion of the King's intention appears in Horace Walpole's *Memoirs of the Early Reign of George the Third*. "So complete was the King's deference to the will of his mother, that he blindly accepted the bride she had chosen for him; though to the very day of the Council he carried on his courtship to Lady Sarah: and she did not doubt of receiving the crown from him, till she heard the public declaration of its being designed for another." Walpole explains the King's seeming cruelty to Sarah on the ground that "the

Junto (Lord Bute's faction) persuaded the King she was a bad young woman." Did they? It is certain that they tried to, and almost equally certain that they did not succeed. For, as Walpole pertinently asks, "If she was, what hindered her becoming his mistress?" In summing up, he says: "In my opinion, the King had thoughts of her as a wife; but wanted resolution to oppose his mother and Lord Bute. Fortunately, no doubt, in this instance, for the daughter of a subject, and the sister-in-law of so ambitious and exceptionable a man as Fox, would probably have been productive of the most serious consequences."

In the last analysis the King is, after all, the best witness. And had he not declared that he had often flattered himself with the hope that one day or other Lord Bute might consent to his raising Lady Sarah to the throne? Had he not protested before God that he had never had any improper thought with regard to her? Finally, had he not docilely surrendered his fortune into the hands of his Dearest Friend?

Sarah, of course, knew nothing of the King's renunciation; and as she recalled all the hopes and fears of June, the slanders of the Butes became increasingly hard to bear. Had she not fortified herself against the very thing that they were insinuating? For if the King had ever asked her to be his mistress she knew that Mr. Fox would have raised no objection. For one day, at least, the very thought of it had made her sick in her stomach, and she had determined to be "as proud as the devil."

But nothing had been said; and now it was August, the dull season. As she yawned over the pieces in the *London Chronicle* it must have been poor comfort to reflect—as her son, Henry Napier, was destined to do—that had she "been cursed with a single grain of artfulness, or attracted by a silly ambition unconnected with more generous feelings and sentiments, or had used her influence in any way to counter-

act the machinations of her secret opposers about the King, or, in short, acted otherwise than in strict accordance with truth, single-mindedness, and the natural unsuspectingness of her character, she might by her power over the King's affections have baffled all the intrigues against her, and ascended the British throne."

## VI

### *The Royal Wedding and the Coronation*

**B**EYOND THE garden walls of Holland House the royal nuptials and the Coronation continued to supply "food for newsmongers, tattle, solicitations, mantua-makers, jewelers, &c."—and still Sarah did not know whether she would be asked to take part. She knew she was eminently eligible, because, generally speaking, only the daughters of dukes, marquises and earls could attend the Queen. Of duke's daughters, there was none who outranked Lady Sarah Lennox, and no marquis had a daughter of suitable age. Mr. Fox accepted with equanimity the possibility of her being asked: "Bride-maids were to be nam'd; to overlook her had seem'd affected." But Sarah's declaration that she would accept had disturbed his much-trying wife, and when early in August the Lord Chamberlain's request arrived, Lady Caroline at once flew into a huff. Sarah described the family squabble in a letter to Susan:

"Dear Pussy: I have only time to tell you that I have been asked to be brides-maid, and I have accepted of it. I am sorry to say it's against my sister Caroline's opinion a little; I beg you will tell me what your opinion is: I think it is not to be looked upon as a favor, but as a thing due to my rank, and a thing of course, then why refuse it, and make a great talk, be abused by those that don't know and perhaps

by those that do, for they are always in the right you know, whereas, I think accepting of it will not be thought on by anybody, either one way or tother, but looked upon as thing of course; those that think at all about it will say perhaps that I want spirit and pride, which is true enough, for I don't dislike it in the least, and I don't like to affect what I don't feel, tho' ever so right; I would have given it up, if my sister had disliked very much, and that it could be helped, but what excuse could I make? You know, besides, I had talked of liking to do it before the Duke of Devonshire. Mr. Fox said it depended upon my feel about it. Lord Kildare is violently for it, and my sister Kildare rather for it than otherwise; I hope you will too, but you have the happiness of having a proper pride, which I am not endowed with. I was always of opinion that the less fuss or talk there is about it the better, and to let it drop to the world. But to him and his sisters I was and always will be as high and grave as possible; for I think the least flirting would ruin my character quite. But this is not his doing; he only sees the list, for others make it. Adieu.

Yours,

S. Lennox."

Her words poured themselves out—yet how sensible and poised was her attitude. The battle was not won yet. Standing up to Lady Caroline upset her more than she was willing to admit, particularly when she learned that her dearest Suke disagreed with her as well.

"I have received yours since I wrote," Sarah continued in a postscript the next day, "and I am very sorry to find you think me so much in the wrong; but, however, if you will oblige me, you will not say a great deal against it, as it cannot be helped; and my sister Caroline being against it, it makes her talk so much about it, and she calls me mean and dirty, and so forth, which vexes me very much, for I cannot alter

my own opinion, tho' I would have given it up, and she seems so glad to have you on her side, and means to have you join with her to abuse me, and that I cannot bear; so pray, my dear Susan, keep your opinions to yourself, if my reasons at the beginning of this letter don't alter it a little, which I hope it will. You see I am a little angry with my sister Caroline; the reason is, that I heard her just now at the garden door, tell Ly Bateman that it was against her opinion, and so on, and I don't think it so well to tell everybody that she thinks me in the wrong, she ought to hide it rather, but you know she can keep nothing a secret in the world."

Poor Sarah! As if it were not enough to carry off a trying situation nonchalantly, her best friend and her sister must bother and pester her. Mr. Fox, however, contrived, with his usual tact, to make Sarah feel happier about the whole unhappy affair: "Well, Sal," he said in his joking way, "you are the first vargin in England and you shall take your place in spite of them all as chief bridesmaid, and the King shall behold your pretty face and repent."

Lady Susan, also, had been asked to be a bridesmaid, and she would take her place in the procession according to the precedence of her father's earldom. Since Stephen Fox's elevation to the peerage as Lord Ilchester was very recent, his daughter would be the junior bridesmaid. Naturally, Susan was anxious to leave Redlynch and enter into all the bustle and excitement, but Sarah advised her to put off her arrival at Holland House until the middle of August, on account of Lady Kildare's convalescence. Ending her letter with a rustle of chiffons, Sarah added, "I have bespoke you a cheap trimming like mine, as it's long in getting, and I have ordered a white silk to be laid by for you also like mine; I hope you will approve of this. If anything should put off your coming (which I hope it won't), pray send a pair of stays for meas-

ure, as the embroidery is to be measured upon them and that is the longest piece of work."

Everyone was reading the stories that kept appearing in the London *Chronicle*, and speculating about the looks and character of the future Queen. "If the wind and weather permit," the issue of August eleventh-thirteenth, announced, "the intended Queen is to land at the Royal Apartments at Greenwich. It is said, that besides all the accomplishments of a female genius, she eminently possesses the talents of a fine and nervous writer, and that she has given a late elegant specimen, in the pathetic strain, on the calamity of war, to which a part of Mecklenburg has been lately too much exposed." Next, the *Annual Register* remarked that the King's "choice alone, being a sufficient character of Her Serene Highness, people were now obliged to look out for other subjects of conversation; and those were principally the manner in which the King first became acquainted with the extraordinary merit of Her Serene Highness, and her person." And the respectful journalist went on to explain that the monarch first became aware of the existence of the gifted princess from a letter which she had written to the King of Prussia, "on his entering the territories of her cousin the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and which that monarch sent over to his late Majesty, as a miracle of good sense in so young a princess."

Even in this era of press agency it would be hard to find a more fulsome specimen of personal publicity. For George himself, in a letter to Lord Bute written during that same winter of 1759-60 when he forswore Sarah forever, tells how Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg was entered on the list of potential Queens: "Our evening has been spent looking in the New Berlin *Almanack* for Princesses, where three new ones have been found, as yet unthought of, which you shall know when next Leicester House will have the pleasure of



seeing you." Another and more amusing version of the legend relates that the Dowager Princess of Wales, at her wits' end because of the King's infatuation with Sarah, showed her son a copy of Princess Charlotte's letter to the King of Prussia, at the very moment when Sarah had been flirting under his nose. The noble sentiments contained in the epistle are said, by virtue of contrast, to have made the writer shine in the eyes of the jealous man. From that moment, this unlikely story runs, whenever his love made him unhappy, the King's mind turned to Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg as a worthy candidate to become his Queen.

Having announced that the future Queen was a woman of genius, the *London Chronicle* proceeded to regale the public with boudoir tidbits. One Mrs. Pritchard had been appointed hairdresser to the Queen, and the diamond stomacher for her intended Majesty was finished. The stomacher was "the richest thing of the kind ever yet seen"—the capital stone worth fifteen thousand pounds, and the whole piece valued at one hundred thousand.

Horace Walpole, who never missed an event of social consequence, came to town August seventeenth to prepare his "wedding garments." The plans for the festivities fell short of his expectations. "There will be as great magnificence as people can put on their backs—nothing more; no shows or ceremonies," he grumbled to Horace Mann; "Six Drawing-rooms and one ball—that is all; and then the honeymoon in private till the Coronation."

Both Sarah and old Horace may have noted, in between fittings, that except for the one report from the lady at Strelitz, the *Annual Register* had observed a discreet silence concerning the intended Queen's appearance. Then this semi-official organ, in denouncing "the mean and scandalous advantage taken on this occasion of the well natured credulity of His Majesty's subjects," inadvertently revealed the

quandary of the press: "A print feller was base enough to publish, as the true portrait of the Princess, that of a celebrated English beauty, whose name he struck out of the plate to make room for that of Her Most Serene Highness." The implied temptation to resort to such a ruse, and the tactless comments of the editor of the *Annual Register*, must have brought a smile to Sarah's pretty face.

But this was not all that the *Annual Register* had to announce: "While the public were thus employed in conning over arbitrary descriptions, and gazing on spurious prints of the future consort of their beloved monarch, His Majesty himself was giving the proper directions for demanding and bringing over the Princess in a manner suitable to his dignity, and his love for Her Serene Highness."

Lord Harcourt had been sent to her father's court—if, as Horace Walpole said, he could find it. Upon his arrival, the Princess did not dally; she did not even wait to be sure that the formalities had been concluded. After a quiet childhood spent in study, or with a piece of needlework in her hand, so poor that she always wore a house dress except on Sundays or when she went out for an airing in the coach, Charlotte of Mecklenburg, plain and with little but amiability to recommend her, was quite ready to set out from the shabby rococco palace on the outskirts of Nuremberg to become the Queen of a mighty people.

The *Charlotte* yacht, "gilt down to the water's edge," had left England on August seventeenth and reached Stade on the twenty-second. Admiral of the Fleet George, Lord Anson of Soberton, hoisted his flag in the *Charlotte*, and was seconded in his performance of escort duty by his flag captain, Peter Denis, M.P., both veterans of the romantic voyage round the world made by H.M.S. *Centurion*, 1740-44. The Princess embarked the same day, and the yacht fell down the Elbe to Cuxhaven. Sailing from there on the twenty-eighth,

the *Charlotte* encountered stormy winds which prevented her from reaching the port of Harwich until Sunday evening, September sixth.

The Duchesses of Hamilton and Ancaster, who had been sent to Mecklenburg to accompany the Princess, confided to Lord Glenbervie afterward that the intended Queen had been "extremely sick on the passage." In her *mal de mer* poor Charlotte had appeared "very ill-dressed and wore neither rouge nor powder"; and her youth—sixteen—had only made her extraordinary ugliness more lamentable in the eyes of the English beauties. When Horace Walpole heard the details he remembered that someone had told him that, "the painting of the Charlotte yacht would certainly turn the Queen's stomach."

From all accounts, the sea voyage was, indeed, a trying experience which poor Charlotte bore as best she could. But as she could speak no English, and her French was not the same brand of bad French as that which the Duchesses of Hamilton and Ancaster had doubtless learned from their English governesses, conversation lagged. So she sang and played on the harpsichord when she felt able, and affected to be more cheerful than she felt.

The choice of Harwich for the debarkation disappointed thousands of sightseers on the Thames who had expected the Princess to land at Greenwich. "Upwards of two hundred boats" had been hired weeks in advance, "to be at the water at a guinea for each boat." To add to the confusion, Her Highness insisted on remaining on board until three o'clock the following afternoon. Probably she needed a respite between the ordeal of the crossing and the formal receptions that awaited her on shore.

The delay threw the fashionables in London into a bustle of uncertainty. "It was neither certain when she landed, nor when she would be in town," and Walpole "forgave history for knowing nothing when so public an event as the arrival

of a new Queen is a mystery even at the moment in St. James' Street." As he waited, all decked out in his new finery, rumor followed rumor, each contradicting the last. "The bridesmaids whipped on their virginity; the new road and the parks were thronged; the guns were choking with impatience to go off. . . . Five, six, seven, eight o'clock came, and no Queen."

Meanwhile Her Highness was approaching London by leisurely stages. Upon landing at Harwich she had been "received by the Mayor and Aldermen in their usual formalities. About five o'clock she came to Colchester, and stopped at the house of Mr. Enew, where she was received and waited upon by Mrs. Enew and Mrs. Rebow; but Captain Best attended her with coffee, and Lieutenant John Seaber with tea." Being a German girl, Charlotte undoubtedly preferred coffee, but perhaps she remembered that tea was the national drink of her adopted country. When she had refreshed herself, "Mr. Great, of Colchester, had the honour of presenting to Her Majesty . . . a box of candied enrigo root, a product of Colchester, with which the royal family are always presented when they come that way." Enrigo was a medicinal sweet meat, prepared from the roots of sea holly by Robert Buxton, a local apothecary, and it was supposed to possess aphrodisiac properties. One wonders if the Princess tasted of this curious and not forbidden fruit with as much edification as her ancestress, Eve.

Charlotte arrived at Witham at a quarter past seven, where "as elegant an entertainment was provided as time would admit." Her host, Lord Abercorn, had taken pains about the menu and served some leverets and carp. As she supped, "the door of the room was ordered to be wide open, that everybody might have the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing Her Majesty." Tired, no doubt, by the festivities, she spent the night at Witham. She had her sleep out, too, for she did not reach Rumford, where the King's servants and coaches met

her, until after twelve o'clock the next day. The ladies of the royal household had sent her some finery, and when "she went into His Majesty's coach, drove by his body coachman and chief postilion in their caps . . . Her Majesty was dressed entirely in the English taste, she wore a fly cap, with rich laced lappets, a stomacher ornamented with diamonds, and a gold brocade suit of cloaths with a white ground." If this was the famous stomacher valued at one hundred thousand pounds, the reporter for the *London Chronicle* did it scant justice. Possibly it could not be seen to advantage through the coach window, or else he was absorbed in noting the magnificence of the cortege, for he continued: "Her coach was preceded by three of His Majesty's coaches, in which were one of Her Majesty's brothers, some ladies from Mecklenburg, the Lords Harcourt and Anson, etc." All the way she was escorted by soldiers: "The Leicester militia were drawn up in the several towns through which Her Majesty passed, and at Mile End she was met by a party of Horse Grenadiers and Life Guards."

As they drew near to London, her ladies wanted to curl the Princess's *toupet*, but she replied rather tartly that she thought hers looked quite as well as any of theirs did, and that unless the King bade her wear a periwig she would remain as she was. Then, at Whitechapel turnpike, the royal cortege turned off to Bethnal Green and proceeded "thro' Hackney Turnpike, by Shoreditch church, up the City Road, from thence to Marybone thro' Hyde Park, down Constitution Hill, to St. James' Park." When Charlotte "caught the first glimpse of the palace, she grew frightened and turned pale." Perhaps she compared it to the quiet palace on the outskirts of Nuremberg and the park where she had spent so many peaceful days. In the fatigue of being stared at all day by multitudes of her new subjects, her thoughts may have turned to her uneventful childhood, and even the poverty of it must have seemed sweet to the poor, plain girl at this

moment, surrounded as she was by these patronizing English beauties and frightened by the prospect of immediate marriage to a man she had never seen.

The Duchess of Hamilton smiled at her panic, but the Princess managed to summon a ready answer to her condescension: "My dear Duchess," she said with spirit, "you may laugh; you have been married twice, but it is no joke to me."

At last the long, wearisome journey was over, and Charlotte's great moment had come. Her lips trembled as the coach came to a stand-still, but she jumped lightly to the ground. This astonished the Lord Chamberlain, who was waiting to hand her down.

Entering the garden, she sank on her knee to the King. He raised her "in a most affectionate manner," saluted her, and then led her into the palace.

As she crossed the threshold she must have been grateful for the full court dress and large hoop that conveniently concealed any trembling of the limbs from the many curious and unsympathetic eyes. For some of the King's attendants "watched his looks, and thought they discovered a great struggle to conceal the disagreeable surprise he felt on seeing her so plain and awkward." One of them, Lord Glenbervie, found malicious pleasure in the reflection that on entering the palace Princess Charlotte encountered "some of the handsomest women in England, and among the rest Lady Sarah Lennox. . . . The great difference between her and the Queen formed a very striking contrast."

When she caught sight of Charlotte's plain, pale face and thin, insignificant figure, Sarah must have felt a thrill of triumph, for she knew that everyone was comparing her to the Queen. And although she was not given to malice, Sarah would not have been a woman if she had not been pleased to see that she could stand the comparison without disparagement. The shining robe of her bridesmaid virginity—

white lute string with silver trimmings ornamented with pearls—was vastly becoming. But it was not her gown or even her beauty that made her stand out from all the rest, for all the bridesmaids were dressed alike and one or two were as beautiful. As she stood there, among them, she was, in a sense, cast for a role, and excitement made her radiant as an angel.

At this moment Horace Walpole was dashing off a post-script to the Earl of Stafford: "Madame Charlotte is this instant arrived. The noise of coaches, chaises, horsemen, mob, that have been to see her pass through the parks is so prodigious that I cannot distinguish the guns. I am going to be dressed, and before seven shall launch into the crowd. Pray for me."

Poor Charlotte was quite overcome when the bridesmaids and courtiers were presented to her. "*Mon Dieu*," she sighed, "*il y en a tant, il y en a tant!*" She implored Lady Augusta to take her hand and give it to those who were to kiss it; but when the ceremony had been completed she summoned up enough equanimity to play the lute and sing to the company.

About eight o'clock the royal wedding procession to the chapel fell in line. The Serjeant Trumpeter presided over the fanfare of drums and trumpets; next came the servants of the Princess, a page and a "Quarter Waiter." These were followed by a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, the two Senior Heralds, and a Vice Chamberlain. Then a bevy of pretty girls and young matrons, the Maids of Honor and the Ladies of the Bedchamber. The Peeresses came next, followed by the "Unmarried Daughters of Peers." The King's Vice Chamberlain and the Lord Chamberlain walked abreast. At last; "The Bride, in her nuptial habit, supported by their Royal Highnesses the Duke of York and Prince William; her train borne by ten unmarried daughters of Dukes and Earls."

Sarah as premier bridesmaid came first, while Susan as the

junior bridesmaid came last. Between the two young girls came a procession of bridesmaids whose order by precedence made of them a veritable pageant of British history. Thus, behind Sarah marched Lady Caroline Russell, daughter of the Duke of Bedford, descended from the favorite of Henry the Seventh and his three successors. Then came the daughter of the proud Duke of Hamilton, Lady Anne, who but for the fact that Scotch dukes rank after English would have led the procession. Two favorites of William of Orange were represented by Lady Harriet Bentinck, the descendant of the Duke of Portland, and Lady Elizabeth Keppel, whose grandfather had been the less respectable Earl of Albemarle, and whose grandmother was also Lady Sarah's. Next came Lady Elizabeth Ker, the sister of that very Lord Newbottle whose attentions had perhaps prevented Lady Sarah from marching elsewhere in the procession. Lady Caroline Montagu represented the Sandwich earldom which Charles the Second had bestowed on one of his admirals; and, finally, Lady Louisa Greville, who was only the daughter of an eighteenth-century politician, marched abreast of Lady Susan.

Sarah must have been well acquainted with the bridesmaids, for they all attended the same parties and moved in the same circle. Several were her intimate friends; others had watched and speculated about her affair with George. Now, as they drew near the altar, they were ready to catch any look that might pass between the premier bridesmaid and the King—and so were many others in the royal chapel.

When the Queen had been conducted to the chapel, "the Lord Chamberlain, and Vice Chamberlain, with two Heralds, returned to wait upon His Majesty." All eyes were upon the monarch as he came forward to meet his bride and Dr. Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury.

No one noticed anything out of the ordinary in the King's demeanor during the marriage service, until it came to the time described in the rubric: "The Psalm ended and the



Man and the Woman kneeling before the Lord's Table, the Priest standing and turning his face toward them," said, "Look, O Lord, mercifully upon them from Heaven and bless them. And as Thou didst send Thy blessing upon Abraham and Sarah to their great comfort, so vouchsafe to send Thy blessing upon these Thy servants." Several people noticed that as the Archbishop pronounced these words the King's face clouded and there was an audible stirring in the congregation. Possibly a few of the wedding guests were of a sentimental turn—and others would have preferred a British Queen, descended from Charles the Second, to the German Princess. But even Horace Walpole, who was neither sentimental nor sorry to see Lady Sarah jilted, reported in his *Memoirs* that "during the wedding service, on mention of Abraham and Sarah, the King could not conceal his confusion."

After the ceremony, Their Majesties sat on one side of the altar on two state chairs under a canopy, and "Her Royal Highness, the Princess Dowager of Wales, sat facing them, in a chair of state, on the other side; and all the rest of the royal family on stools; and the quality, with the foreign Ministers . . . on benches. The ceremony was ended at half an hour after ten, which was announced by the firing of the guns at the Park and the Tower. The houses of London and Westminster were finely illuminated."

Presently the whole company left the chapel and gathered in the Drawing Room. "The Queen," Walpole wrote Horace Mann, "was in white and silver; an endless mantle of violet coloured velvet, lined with ermine, and attempted to be fastened on her shoulder by a bunch of large pearls, dragged itself and almost the rest of her clothes halfway down her waist. On her head was a beautiful little tiara of diamonds, worth threescore thousand pounds . . . Her train was borne by the ten bridesmaids . . . their heads crowned with diamonds and in robes of white and silver. Lady Caroline Rus-

sell is extremely handsome, Lady Elizabeth Keppel very pretty, but with neither features nor air nothing ever looked so charming as Lady Sarah Lennox; she has all the glow of beauty peculiar to her family."

Everyone was tired and the reception was not very gay. While they were waiting for supper the Queen played the harpsichord and sang to the royal family again. She and the King discussed the different German dialects, and the King asked whether the Hanoverian was not pure.

"Oh, no, Sir," said the Queen, "it is the worst of all." And with this untactful remark, the Queen, as far as posterity can tell, went to her wedding night.

The next morning at his levee the King said to Lord Hardwicke, "It is a very fine day."

"Yes, Sir," the old gossip replied, "and it was a very fine night."

There was more than one jest of this sort: "Lord Bute had told the King that Lord Orford had betted his having a child before Sir James Lowther, who had been married the night before to Lord Bute's eldest daughter; the King told Lord Orford he should be glad to go his halves." The bet was made with Mr. Rigby, and someone asked him how he could be so bad a courtier as to bet against the King? He replied: "Not at all a bad courtier; I betted Lord Bute's daughter against him."

Sarah, still tingling with her triumph of the day before, set off again for St. James to attend the Drawing-room which would follow the Levee. Dressed in the same "white bodied coat of lute string with silver trimming" which she had worn at the wedding, she took her place beside the Queen, who stood below the throne with all the other bridesmaids drawn up in a line.

Presently, the Duchess of Hamilton began presenting the women, and the Duke of Manchester the men. The Queen received them with shy graciousness, but without a word;

for, as she knew nobody, it had been decided that she was not to speak. As Sarah stood there, looking "by far the chief angel," a very old and nearsighted Jacobite follower of the Pretender approached. This was Lord Westmoreland, who had never appeared at Court since the Hanoverian succession, but who had been reluctantly persuaded by his friends "to honour the marriage of a native monarch by his presence." The old man saw but dimly, and to Sarah's astonishment he plumped down on his knees before her and took her hand to kiss. She drew back startled, and coloring deeply, exclaimed, "I am not the Queen, Sir!"

This incident created a laugh, and was retold. When George Selwyn, the wit, heard of it, he observed, "Oh, you know he always loved *Pretenders*!" Walpole, too, was amused by this "ridiculous circumstance," and observed, "People think that a Chancellor of Oxford was naturally attracted by the blood of a Stuart."

Meanwhile the real Queen was being scrutinized. Walpole, watching Charlotte with the rest reported: "She is not tall, nor a beauty, pale, and very thin; but looks sensible, and is genteel. Her hair is darkish and fine; her forehead low, her nose very well except the nostrils spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault, but her teeth are good. She talks a good deal, French tolerably, possesses herself, is frank, but with great respect to the King." This description is more favorable than most, although one shrewd courtier noticed that the Queen was more knowing than she appeared to be. But even Walpole, who felt that on the whole the auguries pointed toward a happy marriage, scarcely ever mentioned her without a snicker, as if there were something too *gauche* for words in her bearing, and as if she were a singularly helpless girl whom the old-timers at Court were making a fool of. He found it excruciatingly comical "to see Kitty Dashwood, the famous old beauty of the Oxfordshire Jacobites, living in the palace as duenna to the Queen. She and Mrs. Boughton,

Lord Lyttelton's ancient Delia, are revived again in a young Court that never heard of them." One pities the shy, bewildered girl amid all this gossip and intrigue; for the King protested against foreign servants as an unnecessary expense, and permitted her to retain only one or two of her Mecklenburg ladies—who were doubtless as flustered as she—to comfort her among so many strangers.

Sarah, of course, heard the Queen discussed, and doubtless rejoiced again because she was so well out of it. She enjoyed the ball that took place after her embarrassing exchange with Lord Westmoreland, although her friends teased her the whole evening. There came another Drawing Room, which passed without an unfortunate incident; and the following Monday she took her place as usual when the Queen received "the address of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen sitting on the throne attended by the bridesmaids." Then, at last, there was a respite, and the royal bride and groom left St. James' to spend a honeymoon in private until the Coronation.

They had all read, *ad nauseam*, about the royal yacht: "The pillars and every other ornament on board being finely gilt, even the blocks and carriages for the guns." Everyone knew that the *Charlotte* had been designed for the royal wedding trip, and that the bed on board was reputed to be the finest that ever was seen. Some deplored the circumstance that the Queen was so poor a sailor. She would scarcely enjoy a honeymoon at sea even on "the most superbly and elegantly decorated vessel" that had ever been conceived.

Sarah had neither time nor inclination to write letters between the Wedding and the Coronation, for Susan and Sarah's two sisters Kildare and Fox were all at Holland House, and the season was in full swing. No one talked of anything but clothes and diamonds and bridesmaids, and Susan and Sarah who had figured so brilliantly in the wed-

ding pageant were the rage. Besides, Sarah had a new admirer to divert. Lord Errol was handsome and he was immense—in fact, ludicrously big. Horace Walpole had remarked that “at the Wedding, dressed in tissue, he looked like one of the Giants in Guildhall, new gilt.” Lord Errol was ridiculous not only in stature but in manner; he lacked finesse and his *gaucherie* tempted Sarah to lead him on.

At last, Tuesday, the twenty-second of September, the day appointed for the “august solemnity,” the Coronation, dawned. London became one vast buzz and noise, overrun with hurrying crowds. The streets, and balconies, and windows, and parks were filled with eager multitudes, each person craning his neck to watch the guards and processions assembling toward the Palace Yard. The *Annual Register* of 1761 reported the occasion with its usual mild obsequiousness—the joyful shouts of the people, the booming guns in the park, the obeisances, the respectful peers, etc., but for a more realistic account one turns as usual to Horace Walpole: “After being exceeded with hearing of nothing else for six weeks, and having every cranny of my ideas stuffed with velvet and ermine, and tresses, and jewels,” he wrote Horace Mann, “I thought I was very cunning in going to lie in Palace Yard, that I might not sit up all night in order to seize a place. The consequence of this wise scheme was, that I did not get a wink of sleep all night; hammering of scaffolds, shouting of people, relieving guards, and jangling of bells, was the concert I heard from twelve to six, when I rose; and it was noon before the procession was ready to set forth, and night before it returned from the Abbey. I then saw the Hall, the dinner, and the Champion, a gloriously illuminated chamber, a wretched banquet, and a foolish puppet-show.”

Probably this jaundiced report was the result of his insomnia, for he admitted later that the ceremony at the Hall had been glorious. “The blaze of lights, the richness and variety of habits, the ceremonial, the benches of peers and

peeresses, *frequent and full*, was awful as a pageant can be. . . . The coronets of the peers and their robes disguised them strangely; it required all the beauty of the Dukes of Richmond and Marlborough to make them noticed." He had a kinder word now, for Sarah's new beau: "One there was, though of another species, the noblest figure I ever saw, the High Constable of Scotland, Lord Erroll—as one saw him in a space capable of containing him, one admired him."

Yet the arrangements had not gone off as smoothly as they should have. "In the morning they had forgot the Sword of State, the chairs for the King and Queen, and their canopies. They used the Lord Mayor's for the first, and made the last in the Hall; so they did not set forth until noon; and then, by a childish compliment to the King, reserved the illumination of the Hall till his entry"—so that His Majesty might be surprised by the quickness with which the sconces caught fire—"by which means they arrived like a funeral, nothing being discernible but the plumes of the Knights of the Bath, which seemed a hearse." Evidently everything had been left to the last moment except the ermine and the jewels; and one wonders how it was that the organizers of the Coronation forgot so many important properties of the show and bungled the effect by poor lighting. Hollywood producers would be shocked by such inefficiency.

There was even a comic touch at a solemn moment. The function of the King's Champion was to ride, clad in complete armor—on his right the High Constable, on his left the Earl Marshal—into Westminster Hall during the Coronation Banquet, and challenge to single combat any who should dispute the King's right to reign. The challenge was thrice repeated by the herald—at the entrance to the hall, in the center, and at the foot of the dais. On picking up his gauntlet for the third time, the Champion was pledged by the King in a gilt-covered cup, which was then presented to him as his fee. According to some authorities, if the Champion had oc-

casion to fight and was victorious, his fee was the armor he wore and the horse he rode, the second best in the royal stables—but no such occasion ever arose. At this Coronation Banquet, although the Champion acted his part admirably, and dashed down his gauntlet with proud defiance, his associates—Lord Effingham, Lord Talbot, and the Duke of Bedford—were woeful. Lord Talbot piqued himself on backing his horse from the hall; he had taught it not to turn its rump on the King. But he had taken so much pains to train it that it entered backward; and at his retreat the spectators clapped. “A terrible indecorum,” Walpole grumbled, “but suitable to such Bartholomew Fair doings.”

Walpole ranked Lady Kildare—although a bit too large—the Duchess of Richmond, and Lady Pembroke as the capital beauties. He did not mention Sarah, probably because she did not appear in the procession itself. But that she was present, watching and noting everything, is certain from her reminiscences with Susan, forty-seven years later. According to Susan’s journal, Sarah “talked enthusiastically of the King’s looks and manner at his Coronation which she saw in the Abbey; so fine a figure in the robes he wore; of the chair he sat in; of his grave and solemn manner, and great attention to the great charge he was undertaking—this contrasted with his youthful countenance, his beautiful teeth; the Archbishop’s anointing him, the splendour of all around she could never forget.”

Well, Horace Walpole sighed, it had all been delightful, but nothing was half so delightful as its being over. “The gabble one heard about it for six weeks before, and the fatigue of the day, could not well be compensated by a mere puppet-show; for puppet-show it was, though it cost a million.”

While all those of sufficient rank and fortune saw the puppet-show, an obscure but still more remarkable Englishman was not so well satisfied. Dr. Samuel Johnson, with his friend

John Gwynn, was moved to protest that: "Our Kings with their train have crept to the temple through obscure passages, and the crown has been worn out of sight of the people. Of the multitudes whom loyalty or curiosity brought together, the greater part has returned without a single glimpse of their prince's grandeur, and the day that opened with festivity ended with discontent. . . . The path in the late coronations has been only from Westminster Hall . . . to the Abbey door by way of St. Margaret's Churchyard." Since the people had paid a very pretty penny to get their King properly crowned, it did seem as if they were entitled to at least one "glimpse of their prince's grandeur."

But whether His Majesty's subjects lauded the Coronation in the respectful vein of the *Annual Register*, or mocked it approvingly as did Horace Walpole, or reckoned the cost of the show to the people as did John Gwynn and Samuel Johnson, was of little importance. Say what one would, George the Third and Charlotte of Mecklenburg were now married, and crowned King and Queen of England. So the English people went about their business again. The young King was nicely settled with a good German girl, and presently there would be a nursery full of princes and princesses.

In reviewing George's courtship and jilting of Lady Sarah Lennox, one perceives most distinctly the emotions of two persons—Henry Fox's ambition, and the passion of the King. George's expression of his love was halting because he was tied to his mother's full court dress and large hoop. But no one who watched him when Sarah was in the room—not even his sister and her ladies who would have been gratified to notice coolness in him—ever doubted that the King was deeply in love with her. His sensibility was conceded even by the Bute faction; and Walpole believed he had wanted to make her Queen.

Perhaps, as he admired Sarah during the wedding ceremonies, Horace Walpole may have recalled the lines she had



uttered as Jane Shore, when he had likened her to some lovely Correggio "with her hair about her ears":

Then judge the fair Offender with good-nature,  
And let your fellow-feeling curb your satyre.  
What if our neighbors have some little failing,  
Must we need fall to damning and to railing?  
For her excuse, too, be it understood,  
That if the woman was not quite so good,  
Her Lover was a King, she flesh and blood."

But Lady Sarah needed no excuse. Her only weakness had been in allowing Mr. Fox to scheme for her, and now that his campaign had failed all the world could see that she was not seriously troubled, or even put out. When persuaded that no girl in her senses would pass up the opportunity to become Queen of England, she had merely done her dutiful best to play up to the role for which Mr. Fox had cast her. Indeed, she had since borne herself, after the first embarrassments had been got through, with such dignity and grace that no one could continue to think of her as "poor Lady Sarah."

In truth, kindness and pity were not begged by this beautiful great-granddaughter of Charles the Second. Perhaps she felt—now that it was all over and done with—that it had been rather a lark to keep the whole of Leicester House on pins and needles for two long years.

## VII

### *Belle of London*

NOW THAT the Royal Wedding and the Coronation were over, the fashionables settled down to enjoy the festivities of the young Court. Lady Sarah entered into the gaieties with mingled relief and anticipation. Although she was no longer the possible Queen of England, she was still almost the highest ranking young lady in the London marriage market, with a reputation for beauty and fascination.

To Sarah's regret, Lady Susan Fox-Strangways had left town for the country soon after the Coronation. On October twenty-fourth Sarah wrote her a lively account of the recent balls and parties—proof that she was not moping over her supposed disappointment. "I desire you may never accuse me," she said, "of not keeping my resolutions. I'll give you proof to the contrary that will surprise you, when I tell you that Ajax employ'd begging, prayer, kneeling, and even tears, to persuade me from my purpose, and I stood it all out for an hour. I can't say I did it firmly, for I could not help crying at seeing a great man in distress, but yet I did not allow myself to be much moved, for all was in vain. Is not that a heroic action worthy of your disciple? That is, supposing I was right in refusing it at first, for that is another question quite, you know, but allowing that I mean. We are upon civil and friendly terms as if nothing had happened; that I like."

Sarah's "Ajax" was James Hay, fourteenth Earl of Erroll.

Through the Hays he boasted the oldest blood in Great Britain. Their deed box was said to contain the Charter of the Lands of Erroll in Perthshire which they had received in the twelfth century when a Hay served as cupbearer to both Malcolm the Fourth and William the Lion Hearted of Scotland. James, the fourteenth Earl of Erroll was also the seventeenth hereditary High Constable of Scotland, the office dating back further than the earldom.

The Earl of Erroll had other assets as well; his superb appearance had attracted the laughing admiration of even Horace Walpole at the Coronation, and Sir Joshua Reynolds had pronounced him the most conspicuous figure in the entire pageant. But in spite of his magnificent physique and bearing, there was an ingenuousness about the young man that provoked a smile. Everyone remembered the ridiculous scene that had occurred when the High Constable first exercised his privilege of remaining covered in the presence of the sovereign. As George the Third had entered Westminster Hall to attend the Coronation Banquet, one and all uncovered in the presence of Majesty, except Lord Erroll. To his extreme consternation, the flunkies behaved as if he were committing a terrible misdemeanor. Blushing furiously at the ripple of dismay he was causing among the august company, Lord Erroll kept his hat on, and stared fixedly at the King, until at last George noticed his confusion, and indicated his royal assent and approval.

Sarah would have nothing to do with "Ajax" except to make a good story of his proposal. Soon everyone knew that she had refused young Lord Erroll. To tell was not kind, but it was very natural—it was becoming such a bore to be known only as the girl who had been jilted by the King!

"Oh Lord! Only think, I had almost forgotten the most important thing in my letter," Sarah confessed a few days later. "Charles Fox has made some latin verses that were sent up for good; the purport of them is to desire a pigeon to fly

to his love, Susan, and carry her a letter from him, and that if it makes haste, it will please both Venus, its mistress, and him. There now, are you not proud to have your name wrote in a scholar's exercise?"

At twelve, Charles Fox fancied himself in love with his cousin, Lady Susan, and sighed for her in a style that was as polished as he was precocious. But in spite of his and Sarah's entreaties, Susan remained obdurate. Her continued absence so upset Charles that he would take no interest in *The Revenge*, which the young people at Holland House were rehearsing for the holidays. "He won't learn his part perfect, won't rehearse. In short, shews plainly that your not being here is the reason he won't enter into it and be eager, which you know is the only way of going on with comfort."

Charles's sulks, and a great cold in her head, made Sarah cross. To make matters worse, Stephen, Charles's fat older brother, was going off on a visit. On bidding Sarah good-by he said, "Don't refuse a good match when you can get it, and don't go to plays and operas too often."

Everyone was counseling her to marry, and on December twentieth Sarah reported a new prospect to Susan: "I have been reading over some of your letters, and I find I forgot to answer your last in regard to Mr. B——, which you call an old story (not justly) for it's quite a new one I think. We don't always agree about those sort of things, you know, but that you may not accuse me in this, I will lay the case before you and ask your advice." Reading between the lines, here and in other letters of this period, it is clear that Susan had been scolding about Sarah's impulsiveness, and counseling her to be more on her guard with men in the future. Sarah accepted Susan's tutelage with docility, for her two unfortunate experiences had shattered her confidence in her own ability to determine the intentions of her admirers. So she now implored Susan to write her what she made of Mr. B——'s attentions. "He has (what is call'd) followed me

constantly whenever I have been in town. I have not put myself in his way (do ye take me), for at Leicester House (*en presence de ma soeur*) we changed places three times and he followed us. At night I went with my sister to the Play—there was he in the front boxes and came in a minute to my *house and corner*. This, you will allow, is *particular*. My sister, who is quick at those sort of things, has settled it that he will make his declaration immediately.” Sarah did not agree with Lady Caroline, because she and Mr. B—— recently had had a slight tiff.

“I have the comfort to think,” Mr. B—— had confided one evening as he escorted her home in her coach, “that if I marry a fine lady she will love me vastly, because I am so poor that she would have to live on love and bread and butter.”

Taking this as a hint that he did not intend to marry, Sarah was affronted. “I think you’d much better not marry in a hurry,” she replied tartly, “as you’ll not find it easy to meet with such a person.”

Seeing that she was a little put out, he asked her what was the matter. “Nothing,” Sarah replied, and studied his face to see if it looked angry or blank, but could not determine. He had said very little after that, and handed her out with formal politeness at Holland House.

“I have not seen him since,” Sarah continued to Susan. “You will say I might find out what he thought by his conversation, but it’s generally loud and of indifferent subjects, only broad hints now and then that he likes me, asking me constantly where I am to go, and when I shall be in town, and that he only comes to see me, and so forth. He has got a free access into this house, by coming to see Ste., and talking politics to Mr. Fox. He is worse than Lord Shelburne I think.” (Employed by Lord Bute in his negotiations with Henry Fox, Lord Shelburne was a frequent visitor at Holland House that winter; Sarah seems to have found his political chatter,

and that of Mr. Bunbury, who often accompanied Lord Shelburne, equally tiresome.)

This is hardly the language of a girl who is angling for a proposal. Did Sarah merely wish Mr. B—— to satisfy her vanity by proposing to her? Was she seriously interested in him, or he in her? Mr. Fox and Lady Caroline insisted that his remark in the coach had been “a kind of offer.” But Sarah had grown wary of encouraging a man on such ambiguities, and she had lost confidence in Mr. Fox’s acumen as a matchmaker. Her dependence on Susan’s judgment, however, had increased. “I have worried you with a tiresome letter about myself, but as it is a *case* (and that they generally are long) which you are to decide upon, I shall make no excuse but go on.”

Since Susan was to decide her fate, Sarah proceeded to tell her Mr. B——’s drawbacks as a mate. Lady Caroline had heard that his father had an oddness in his temper a little like madness. “That’s a shocking circumstance if it is really like madness,” Sarah admitted, “but it may be only an odd temper, and that makes a great difference, you know. Adieu, if I see him before I send this I will write more, and if he says no more he is a Shabby Dog—no more nor no less. But I am not sure what he means . . .”

It was extremely trying to have another suitor who would not come to the point. More exasperating still, Susan replied in a vein that implied she thought Sarah was still suffering from the King’s jilting. Perplexed, Sarah explained, “I must tell you that tho’ at present, Prince Prettyman” [George the Third] “might have a little share in a refusal (if I had an offer), yet he had not the least with regard to Ajax, upon my word he had not, for I did not then believe he was in the least serious, indeed I am far from being certain now, but then I did not really like him enough. So resume your good opinion of my resolution, for if I am not encouraged I never shall ar-

rive to perfection. Pray in your answer whenever you name either of these two people, call them Ajax and the Marquis, for the latter is so like a Marquis in a French story book, that I dote upon that name for him." But she did not say that she doted on the man.

Susan, nevertheless, joined the Foxes in pressing her hard to encourage her new admirer. Their reasons for smiling on the match were obvious. "Mr. B——"—Thomas Charles Bunbury—was a well bred, personable young man with definitely favorable prospects.

The elder son and heir apparent of the Rev. Sir William Bunbury, the fifth Baronet, D.D. of Oxford, and M.A. of Cambridge, was principally distinguished by the existence in his family tree not only of the Bunbury baronetcy but of the great properties of the junior line of Hanmer, which branched off with the rise of Sir Thomas Charles Hanmer. Speaker of the House of Commons, to Sir Thomas had been granted the second Hanmer baronetcy in the seventeenth century. He was founder of the second Hanmer family in his own right, and had accumulated a substantial fortune by his skill in marrying rich wives, and his good luck in inheriting from them. His first wife was the dowager Duchess of Grafton, widow of the First Duke. When he died in 1746, it had been quite clear that the child of his last wife was not his heir, but the progeny of her lover. The reverend nephew, Sir William Bunbury, had kept out the bastard without difficulty, and succeeded to the fortune and great estates, including Barton and the Mildenhall properties. The clergyman was now old and infirm, and his son, Mr. Thomas Charles Bunbury—although not rich enough according to the standards which Mr. Fox had acquired at the Pay Office—was considered a very eligible *parti*.

While Sarah was agitating herself about Mr. Bunbury's intentions, Louisa Conolly wrote her of meeting Lord Newbottle in Ireland, and Sarah's fancy flew back to their secret

trysts and pledges of eternal devotion. Her Romeo had not meant his vows, but he had uttered them with convincing ardor. In replying to Louisa, Sarah could not resist the temptation of enclosing a friendly note to the one man who had made love to her as if he meant it.

"Louisa showed him my letter," Sarah reported to Susan. "He read it and said he really thought I was vastly in the right, for that he must own it would be a foolish match for us both, but that he was very glad to find that I had a regard for him; for he was sure he had never behaved ill to me, and therefore was glad to see I did not believe all the stories that I had heard of him. He sent his *respects* to me, and assures me he is very much obliged to me for my *regard*, and that he agrees with me quite about it, but hopes we shall be very good friends and so forth. At the same time he told Louisa he would keep out of my way for fear of being in love with me (there is not much danger), but however the thing is a good thing whatever is the motive. He told her he had lived in a kind of *Hell* to forget me, and now he might go to England. 'After all,' says he, 'it is much better as it is, for I should have made a damned bad husband.'" All this was a very proper ending to a youthful indiscretion. She sent Lord Newbottle her compliments and a message that she was glad they agreed so well; she was obliged to him for his regard and assured him of hers. It was all very well over, she opined.

For distraction, she read the *Iliad* over again, and wished that Susan were at Holland House to con it with her. But Sarah was no dowdy "blue," and other matters than Hector and Achilles engrossed her. She had got a new dressed sack, and dear Monsieur L'Estoret coiffed her, "*en perfection*." She passed one vastly pleasant evening at Lady Sackville's playing quadrille with Lady Elizabeth Keppel, Lady Caroline Russell, and Lord Carlisle, a schoolfellow of Charles Fox, and the sworn companion of that future statesman's youthful scrapes and follies. Sarah attended the Birth-



day in a gown of garter-blue satin with a white and silver body decked with garter-blue trimming; and the crowd was so great that Lady Northumberland complained that she could not walk gracefully.

Sarah did not mention Mr. Bunbury again in her letters of January. Had Susan's reply to her letter of December twentieth offended her? Or was she waiting for Susan to pass judgment on her admirer? Susan returned to Holland House at the end of the month, and she seems to have raised no objections to the match—for, turning to the omniscient Horace Walpole, one finds that the engagement of Lady Sarah Lennox to Mr. Thomas Charles Bunbury was announced early in February.

The perspicacious old bachelor did not like Sarah's fiancé. Mr. Bunbury had been put in to represent some northern constituency, and Walpole took a keen delight in describing his antics in the House of Commons to Sir Horace Mann, who was in Florence: "We have had an odd kind of Parliamentary opposition, composed only of the King's own servants. In short, in the House of Lords the Duke of Bedford made a motion against the German war . . . Young Bunbury, whom I sent to you, and whom you have lately sent us back, and who is enrolled in a club of chicken orators, notified a day on which he intended to move such a question as had appeared in the Lords. When the day came, no Mr. Bunbury came—till it was too late. However, he pretended to have designed it, and on the 15th appointed himself to make it on the 17th, but was again persuaded off, or repented, and told us he would reserve himself and his objections for the day of the subsidy to Prussia. Nothing was ever more childish than these scenes. To show himself more a man, he is going to marry Lady Sarah Lennox, who is very pretty, from exceeding bloom of youth; but as she has no features, and her beauty is not likely to last so long as her betrothed's, he will probably repent of this step, like his motions."

The House of Commons did not take kindly to such shilly-shallying, either; and some exasperated member promptly christened Bunbury "the infant Hercules." The rash young man had intended to make his motion against the war without consulting Mr. Fox. The old politician, who had learned of his intention and who believed that it was likely to bring on an ungovernable debate, determined to quash it. While the courting was going on, he had Lady Caroline persuade Mr. Bunbury to postpone his motion, and at last Lord Shelburne made him drop it entirely. To celebrate his success, Mr. Fox gleefully composed an epigram:

A cock-match at Westminster lately was made,  
The cockpit was crowded, great wagers were laid;  
The people, impatient, heard at last the Fox  
Had stole over-night both the beautiful cocks."

The genial old Paymaster delighted in poetical quips, and when Mrs. Vesey, a famous hostess, asked Sarah to dine without her fiancé, Mr. Fox penned this couplet which he forwarded in the young lady's name:

Be it known to Mrs. Vesey  
Without my Bun I can't sit easy.

Mr. Fox's couplet aptly describes her mood, for Sarah was enchanted with her "French Marquis." Gay and well groomed, Mr. Bunbury cut a figure in the fashionable world, especially among the gentlemen of the turf. Furthermore, he had some pretensions to learning, for he was chosen a member of Johnson's famous Literary Club. Among politicians he was known to be a staunch Whig, for whom Lord Shelburne expressed a warm regard and to whose co-operation he attached considerable importance. In short, Mr. Bunbury's distinguished contacts, his good looks and extreme elegance were enough to dazzle a girl of seventeen into believing her-

self in love. But there is no way of knowing Sarah's innermost feelings in regard to her future husband, as her confidante, Susan, was with her at Holland House until her wedding.

Although Mr. Fox could not have ignored certain less savory aspects of his future brother-in-law's reputation, he continued to forward the match, and wasted no time in communicating with the elder Bunbury in regard to the necessary financial arrangements. On March ninth, 1762, he wrote Sir William Bunbury, again from the Pay Office—perhaps the most appropriate place one could imagine for the adjustment of all the financial details which an aristocratic marriage then entailed:

"Sir: I informed the D. of Richmond by letter of what passed at your house. His Grace answers that you must know better than anybody what is necessary for you to keep, and believes with me, if you find it possible to part with more hereafter, that you will. He laments (I hope more than enough), the smallness of their present income; which I own however two people so very young can hardly be expected to have prudence enough to live within. His Grace says he is ready to give you five per cent for the £8000, on this reasonable condition, that the principal money shall not be required of him before a peace may make it *easier* to procure it. He thinks it time to fix pin money and jointure. The young lady makes it her choice to have no pin money. As to jointure the D. of Richmond, Lord Cadogan, Lady Caroline and I, all think that we must not be content with less than £1000, a year rent charge. When the whole estate comes together, this cannot be thought too much; and should the accident happen sooner, the eldest son will be too young to feel any ill effects from it.

"I beg leave to hope you will have no *objection* to this; and that we may proceed with as much expedition as Mr. Shaler, and, (the person Lady Sarah employs), Mr. Peterson,

will allow. When Mr. Shaler has the materials to proceed upon, I suppose he has your orders to come to me.

"I hope you found Lady Bunbury better, and all the rest of your family well.

"I am, with the greatest respect,

"Sir, your Most Obedient

&

"Most Humble Servt.

"H. Fox."

These matters were settled to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, for on Saturday, May fifteenth, Mr. Fox wrote Dr. Francis, summoning him to officiate at the wedding. "Lest continued thinking on this subject should too much inflame and warm imagination," he told him, "for a change I give to your wonder and consideration the Duke of Newcastle's resignation, which is fixed and certain."

It was partly affection and partly vanity that prompted Sarah to send for the old man. During the years she had known him as private chaplain to Lady Holland, Dr. Francis had taught Sarah to declaim, and Charles Fox to read. As his star pupil in amateur theatricals, it was but natural that she should want him to perform the marriage ceremony. Eton boys knew Dr. Francis first as one of the innumerable translators of Horace, and afterward as the father of "Junius"—Sir Philip Francis, the writer who contrived to occupy more space in the annals of literature through his anonymity than through any intrinsic importance. Gibbon has recorded that Dr. Francis might have taught him to relish the Latin poets had he not preferred the pleasures of London to the instruction of his pupils. During his chaplaincy at Holland House, Dr. Francis combined both, to perfection.

Lady Sarah Lennox and Mr. Thomas Charles Bunbury were married on June second, 1762, in the private Chapel of Holland House. Sarah's beauty was so well recognized that it

aroused no special comment; everyone expected a lovely bride, but what was the groom like? The wedding guests craned their necks to get a look at him. Mr. Bunbury, they agreed, had great elegance. His bearing was a touch on the languid side, yet it contrasted perfectly with Lady Sarah's radiant vitality.

When the wedding feast was over, Mr. Fox retired to his study to comment on it in his Memoir. "Lady Sarah's least qualification," he wrote, "is her transcendent beauty. Mr. Bunbury is a fortunate man, *sua si bona nôrit*. Not rich enough, but 'tis a match of her own making, and happiness don't depend on riches. At this very time," he added wistfully, "H.M. [George the Third] is very ill. It well might have, but it had no relation to his ill usage of that sweet girl and worse of himself in her regard."

"A match of her own making"—Henry Fox, for all his shrewdness, was still able to indulge in wishful thinking. He might regret his failure to make Sarah the Queen of England, but since Charlotte of Mecklenburg was now great with child, and George an apparently contented spouse, he could only twit himself for his previous prognostications. A year ago one might perhaps have interpreted the King's illness in a different light, but tonight one's beautiful sister-in-law was safe in the arms of Mr. Thomas Charles Bunbury. In Mr. Fox's eyes, Bunbury was a shallow man whose amours—conducted chiefly during nocturnal perambulations through the most populous streets of London—were notorious, whose political abilities were those of a "chicken orator," and whose only talent was the faculty of sizing up horseflesh. Worst of all, the Bunbury fortune failed to meet the Paymaster's lavish standards. But what Mr. Fox could not bear to face was the idea that *he* had pressed the marriage upon his "dearest Sal." No; it was a match of her own making.

Of the bride's views we have, at this juncture, no notion.

## VIII

### *The Bride*

EIGHT DAYS after her wedding, Sarah scribbled a hasty note to her best friend:

“Barton, June 10, 1762.

“My dear Ly Sue: I begin by saying that I really am in a desperate hurry, and only write to assure you I have not forgot you (as you are apt to suspect me). I like this place vastly. I have seen but few neighbors, but they let me go my own way here, and when once I do that, I am very comfortable. Don’t forget to ask about coming here . . . Adieu, my dr,

“Yours sincerely,

S. Bunbury.

“There are no hills here steep enough to do my health good, but just enough to be pretty.”

The note sounds cheerful, but surprisingly casual! “I like this place. . . . They let me go my own way here”—and never a word of Charles Bunbury! This is hardly the tone of an eight-day bride.

In October, the time of Sarah’s next letter to Susan, the newly married pair were still at Barton Hall in Suffolk with old Sir William and his daughter. As Miss Bunbury continued to manage the household, Sarah had little to do but

adjust herself to marriage and her in-laws. Accustomed as she was to living in a large household, she got along easily with her new relations; and if the old clergyman had "an oddness in his temper," Sarah was too amiable to provoke it. When Susan paid her a visit, Sir William and his brother-in-law, General Armiger, declared their fondness for Sarah and her charming friend; and little Miss Bunbury, a shy, timid girl, had already begun to look to her vivacious, beautiful sister-in-law for assurance and protection.

Sarah was surprised to find that both Sir William and his daughter stood in awe of her husband. In their eyes Charles was a distinguished figure in London society, and his presence brought to Barton a breath of the great world outside. In reality, his chief associates were "turfiters" like himself. As Barton was within easy driving distance of Newmarket, he kept open house for them during the meets. Though Sarah might smile at her unsophisticated in-laws, she shared her husband's interest in the track, and found it thrilling to be the wife of one of England's keenest sportsmen.

"I must tell you now about Newmarket whilst it is in my head, and I will write about the fair when it is over," she wrote Susan in a fever. "The Duke" [probably Cumberland] "won two matches, and the Duke of Grafton a plate with a vile horse. Magpie ran, and was beat. I saw him" [her brother, the Duke of Richmond] "and his horse in the morning, 't is a dear soul. I lost my money. By the bye, you need make no excuses, for I had much rather you should eat a good supper than pay me soon. . . ."

Each autumn, on the eve of Bury St. Edmunds fair, the populace turned out to blow horns and beat drums to tell the world that the sleepy old market town was ready to welcome visitors. Huge beacon bonfires proclaimed the glad news to merchants, cattle-dealers, farmers and laborers, gipsies, mountebanks, traveling bagmen—to anyone and everyone all over the countryside. At dawn the crowds began to fore-

gather in the town. Whole families dressed in their Sunday best drove through the streets in farm carts decorated with ribbons and branches. Some came to buy and some to sell, for the town was packed with booths offering sweetmeats, trinkets, and household notions. Men came to hire and haggle and make merry, for the festival combined amusement with business. Cock fights, pig sticking, races, contests with greased poles, bouts of singletick and wrestling were held in the outskirts. All day long the crowds jostled, and bargained, and shouted and cheered.

As evening drew in, chaises and cabriolets appeared, bearing the gentry to the Ball at the Assembly Rooms. Some of the fashionables came early to have a look at the crowd and the sideshows. Sarah arrived with a gay party from Barton, among them Lord Ossory, a great friend of Charles Bunbury. Sarah liked him vastly, found him an amiable and sensible man. But the manners of certain other gentlemen were unbearable. Lord Petre, for example, was "a nasty toad"; when one danced with him one positively longed to spit in his face. And there were worse—"the agreeable Mr. Shute was so drunk last night," Sarah wrote Susan, "that he swore at his partner Mrs. Harland, till she left him and took another."

Sarah was decidedly out of sorts, and her pique was not entirely the result of a let-down after the Fair. Her horse had gone lame, and she was obliged to entertain a dull lady guest at home while Charles went out hunting. Miss Bunbury was planning an expedition to London, and Sarah would be left quite alone at Barton. Worst of all, Charles would soon be going off to Lord Orford's, and though she was dying to course there herself, he would be going without her. She admitted, with the air of a Griselda, that this was really "no great misfortune," and she was half ashamed to be disturbed by such trivial occurrences. Any sensible wife, to be sure, had to grant her husband leave for sport or other interests. Yet she could not quite repress her restlessness and dissatisfac-



tion. Was not Charles, she wondered, just a trifle indifferent for a husband of five months?

Indeed, Mr. Bunbury was measuring up to just about what his friends had expected of him. It was true that he excelled as a judge of horseflesh. In matching and selling horses his merit was fast acquiring recognition, but he failed in his attempt to secure the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland. Sarah met the disappointment with philosophy: "As to politics, I have renounced them and their vanities, for 'tis only wishing for what one can't have, expecting what one don't get. The short of my moral is that I am mad to think there is no likelihood of my being *Madame la Secrétaire*."

Life could be agreeable enough as long as one had dogs and horses, gardening, snatches of gossip and an occasional ride to hounds. But Charles selfishly interfered with even these innocent consolations. He peremptorily gave away her favorite "Snap" because he was not a good dog. ("Forsooth," Sarah exploded, "pray scold Mr. B. when you see him, for 'tis a burning shame!") And then when her admirer, Mr. Vane, presented her with a horse and a dog, he was all against her keeping them. But Sarah revolted. She thought the horse the dearest thing she had ever seen, though he was neither handsome nor well bred, and the spaniel, which would fetch anything he had been taught the name of, she found as clever as a *chien savant*. She determined to keep them, and her rebellion found a host of supporters: "Everyone says I ought to."

She escaped into her garden, as many a harassed wife has done before and since, and began a "dear plantation by the garden wall." She planted all the varieties Susan had recommended and as many others as she could think of. The treasures were two cedars as high as a chair which she had "fished out" and persuaded to "flourish charmingly." But gardening was not a sufficient consolation for marital neglect, and she would be willing enough to leave her cedars for a Christmas stay at Holland House. She even recalled with a reminiscent

thrill her triumphs at Court. Some gossip had lately told her that the Princess Augusta had colored angrily at hearing her name, and the neglected wife remembered almost with pleasure the lime light—embarrassing though it had been—which she had once enjoyed. Sarah was beginning to crave excitement.

To exorcise the demons of discontent she had been riding to hounds with Mr. Varney. "I hunted twelve miles in one day, which tired me to such a degree that I was sick as a dog, and tho' I had eat not enough to keep life and soul together, for 'twas not a bite since eight o'clock till six at night, I could not touch even a sausage but went to bed." Cured of staying out too long, she restricted herself in future to following a chase or two. "I would be out this very minute," she wrote Susan in November, "but that this devil of a frost hinders me, and so Mr. B. and I sit grumbling and scolding and growling. He because he can't course, and I because I can't hunt and that I fear 'twill kill my dear cedars. That is the present state of affairs in this house."

Such seems to have been the usual atmosphere of the Bunbury menage. Sarah made light of her husband's peevishness, and tried to ignore his futility. But there is not one single word in her letters during the first year of her marriage to indicate that Mr. Thomas Charles Bunbury enjoyed the company of his lovely seventeen-year-old wife.

When the Bunburys arrived at Holland House for the Christmas holidays they found Mr. Fox in politics, for the first time since he had entered the Pay Office. Lord Bute had persuaded his former adversary to become Leader of the House of Commons and a Cabinet Counselor, to help him force the preliminaries of the unpopular treaty with France on the reluctant members of Parliament. Although old and dropsical, Fox had allowed himself to be persuaded because of his ever-increasing jealousy of his old antagonist, Pitt, and

because Bute had promised him the peerage he had been scheming to get for years. In the spring, Lady Holland had been created Baroness Holland in her own right, and Mr. Fox was keener than ever to obtain a similar advancement. Angered by the public's attitude toward the vast riches he had acquired during his Paymastership, he was not averse to using the power and scope of his new post to coerce such of his Whig colleagues as he had failed to carry with him into the Court party. Those who could not be persuaded could be bribed; the few who could not be bought must be intimidated—and no man in England had his talent for manipulating votes. In December, 1762, Mr. Fox was preparing for the last of his fights; he was determined to become Lord Holland and to keep the Paymastership.

Sarah called him "a goose for preferring the hurry and bustle of this new place to his own nonsensical quiet life." But she was far too fond of her sister and brother-in-law to allow "that incomprehensible thing called politics" to trouble their happy relationship, and she was very busy catching up on all that had happened in London during her absence.

The King's popularity was said to be suffering an eclipse, due to Pitt's forced resignation and Bute's appointment as First Minister. Although the birth of the Prince of Wales had occasioned great rejoicing, it had failed to dispel the shadow that surrounded the new regime. The Court was now very dull, Sarah's friends complained; and George the Third had reverted to the miserly economy of his grandfather.

Curious to see if these rumors were true, Sarah set out for St. James in her chair, but was unable to pass through the immense mob which had gathered to watch the King drive by to the House of Lords in his fine coach. She finally reached the palace just as the Queen was coming out, and was carried home again in a very bad humor. Undeterred, she went again a day or two later, and was very graciously received by Her Majesty. As she approached the King, many eyes were upon

them. The courtiers craned their necks to note her bearing and His Majesty's manner to her. "The Lady was not agitated, but the King was," one excessively interested bystander recounted; "he seemed anxious, sensibly trembled, changed color, and at last shivered as Lady Sarah drew near." The picture has a sentimental charm, but it is probably inaccurate, for if the King had betrayed emotion on seeing her again Sarah would certainly have mentioned his agitation in her account of the scene to Susan. Her version of their meeting, however, is ironically terse: "The King asked me if I had not had fine weather all summer. 'Yes,' said I, and that was all."

But the sight of the Prince of Wales, on exhibition in his royal basinette, moved her strangely. "I went to see the little animal and kissed it. For 'tis a beautiful, strong, handsome child; and my sister said it was wrong to kiss it, and the nurse reprimanded me for calling it child, and said 't was a fine young prince." Sarah must have experienced other emotions, too, as she bent over the little Prince. Not he, but another like him, might have been her child, and the heir to the throne. And she felt a greater regret, one which she never mentioned but which was always with her, tormenting her with restless longing. Charles Bunbury was not likely to give her children.

The exhilarating atmosphere of Holland House was not conducive to vain regrets, however, and Sarah plunged into the gaieties she had been deprived of for so long. In her epistles to Susan—such letters in the eighteenth century took the place of the modern gossip column and society page—Sarah pointed up her accounts of the Drawing Rooms, quadrilles, and operas she attended, with tidbits concerning the extravagances of their mutual friends. The men flaunted gay plumage as well as the ladies, and vied in the latest fashions. Charles Fox, her precocious nephew, was already setting the style for his elders, and had created quite a sensation at the

play one evening. He came coiffed *en aile de pigeon* powdered.

At Holland House, Sarah rejoiced in the affection and mutual trust that all the Foxes felt for one another. Lady Holland mothered her, and dear Mr. Fox called her his adorable Sal. She took great liberties with him, sitting in his chair and borrowing his favorite quill to pen her letters. When she sat too long writing, he hurried her to death. Mr. Fox was always hovering around, teasing her, calling her "the widow" because Charles, as usual, had soon tired of her company and gone to Woburn. Sarah did not wince, although the nickname was too apt to fit comfortably. How could she object to Mr. Fox exercising his wit at her expense when he told her, in the next breath, that he was pulling wires to get Mr. Bunbury appointed Secretary of the Legation in Paris under Lord Weymouth? Sarah was perhaps aware that Mr. Fox felt partly responsible for her marriage and that he stood ready to do all he could within reason to advance her husband.

Early in January they all went to spend a very cold and comfortless week with her brother and sister-in-law, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, at Goodwood. There were almost no other guests, and Sarah was delighted to get back to town and move into their new house in Privy Garden which Mr. Bunbury had leased from the Duke of Portland in 1760. The lease covered "a messuage and garden in or near the Privy Garden, abutting south east on a passage formerly called the Stone Gallery"; a dwelling house with outbuildings and adjacent land assigned to its use; and another area across from the Stone Gallery which reached down to the Thames. From a charming view of Privy Garden in 1741, with the Banqueting House (or Whitehall Chapel) on the right—and from a land plan of 1804—the attractive house with palings and a row of trees in front may be identified as

the Bunbury dwelling. The lodgings had been but slight buildings, and the kitchen and offices in a ruinous condition, at the time the lease was made. Probably Mr. Bunbury had not had them remodeled and restored until his marriage, for Sarah described it as a new acquisition. Although the house was small, she thought it very pretty.

In October, 1763, Sarah was again at Barton, keeping open house during the race meets at Newmarket. Evidently Susan had been reading her sermon on contentment, for Sarah retorted: "You have made a mighty pretty discovery, Miss, truly! 'I can think there is happiness in ye country with a person one loves.' Pray now, who the devil would not be happy with a pretty place, a good house, good horses, greyhounds, etc. for hunting, so near Newmarket, what company we please in ye house, and £2000 a year to spend (which we then should have clear)? Add to this that I have a settled comfortable feel that I am doing right, that all my friends love me and are with me as much as possible; in short, that I have not one single thing on earth to be troubled about on my own account. Pray now where is the great oddity of that; or the wretch that would not be happy?"

This was protesting too much, and whistling her contentment too loudly. After this exordium of her blessings, she rattled on about her pleasures and successes. Newmarket was charming; all the charming men were there betting startling sums on quinze and horses. Sir John More had lost nearly £5000, while some Duke, "a fat wretch," had won everything on earth. Already Sarah was discovering that it soothed her pride, daily ruffled by her husband's neglect, to flirt—just for the fun of it, of course. It made her laugh so when that little toad, Lord Villiers, pretended to be seriously in love with her. She had forbidden him to speak of it whether in joke or earnest, and now the poor man was reduced to

making *les yeux doux*, and sighing as if his heart would break. It was quite ridiculous. "You would be in love with his looks," she assured Susan.

Mr. Bunbury had to cut short his coursing and go to London early in November for the meeting of Parliament on the fifteenth. Lord Halifax had written him that he must attend at least a part of the coming session—which implies that he was as negligent an M.P. as he was a husband. Sarah arranged for them to stay at Holland House until Christmas, as her Charles seemed loath to open their house in Privy Garden. Her sister and brother-in-law were in Paris, but Henry Fox, now Lord Holland, had promised to return for the meeting of Parliament, at the urgent request of Lord Sandwich and other members of the Ministry. Everyone was speculating about his intentions. Would he return to office? Sarah knew little beyond the fact that he was returning, "but in what state and for what" she could not tell.

She was deeply troubled about him, both for his own and for her sister's sake. Although Mr. Fox's re-entry into political life the year before had achieved his objectives—he had become Lord Holland and kept the Pay Office—it had undone his reputation. Up to that time he had passed for a sharp, self-seeking politician, formidable in debate and intrigue, no worse nor better than most of the placemen of his day, a man who had made it his rule to live and let live on the public, and to stick to those who had stuck by him. But in the five months he had been in Bute's cabinet he had broken the rules of the game. He had deserted his comrades and cruelly wronged a multitude of humble people hitherto exempted from the severities of party warfare. Until November, 1762, many had cherished a kindly feeling for him because of his frankness and geniality. Now, a year later, there was literally no crime of which the public thought him incapable. For several months Sarah had heard him called a tyrant and a public robber, one whose fitting punishment

was the gallows. When she arrived at Holland House, though she was happy to find that their fondness and intimacy continued untroubled, she was distressed to see how the denunciation in the press had worn down Lord Holland's health and disturbed her sister. But an even greater disturbance was about to take place at Holland House and the instigator was to be—of all people—Susan.

London always seemed half empty to Sarah without Susan, and she was doing her best to tempt her friend to come to town. Since the Court had grown dowdy, Sarah reported on the theater, because she knew very well that Susan shared her enthusiasm for the footlights. Mr. Garrick, "sweet soul," was gone for some time to Italy. But the play-house was carrying on—"and has only some additional forces, particularly a Mr. Powell, who I hear is a very good recruit for tragedy, and Foote—in short, it will flourish very well for one winter, I fancy, and then the angel will come back."

Charles Fox, just turned fourteen, was now an ardent promoter of theatrical productions at Holland House. He aimed to produce something more distinctive than the average amateur theatrical, so he had instigated the custom of calling in one or two professional actors to play with himself and his friends. The custom was already a tradition in the winter of 1763-64. Susan was not startled to find professional actors on the Holland House boards when she came to London, but she was frankly overwhelmed by the good looks and charm of the young Irishman whom Charles Fox had engaged to play opposite her. If Lord and Lady Holland noticed their niece's infatuation, or Mr. William O'Brien's response, they were not concerned. It was rather amusing, the sort of thing one expected in an attractive, talented girl. Susan was a Fox, and it was beyond the realms of possibility that she should so forget her rank as to take to heart the declarations—or the attractions—of a penniless player.



In making their reckonings they evidently failed to remember their own youth or to realize the impetuous pride of William O'Brien. Although a pauper, he traced his descent from the ancient Kings of Erin. With royal blood in his veins, he saw nothing incongruous in courting the granddaughter of Stephen Fox. Yet he knew that the Ilchesters—had they an inkling of his intentions—would do everything in their power to prevent his marrying their daughter. Susan knew this, too. So the lovers decided to bide their time until Susan's twenty-first birthday, on April fifth. They continued to be very discreet throughout the early spring, and never met except when Susan went to sit for her portrait in the studio of Miss Katherine Read.

A servant informed the Ilchesters of their meetings, or Miss Read grew uneasy and worried about her responsibility as a chaperone. In short, someone blabbed; and Lord Ilchester immediately cross-examined his daughter. Susan confessed her attachment, and seemed to give in to her father's indignant fury and affectionate rage. Yes, she would break with Mr. O'Brien, on one condition. Her parents must consent to one last and private farewell.

The parting took place on April first, and Susan made April fools of her parents. The morning after she attained her majority, the day she was able to procure a marriage license, she left Holland House very early, explaining that she was going to breakfast with Lady Sarah Bunbury, before she went to sit for her portrait. No sooner had she passed out of sight of the house than she discovered that she had forgotten the cap she was being painted in. Pretending to be very upset, she sent her footman back to fetch it to Miss Read's studio.

"Be sure and explain to Lord and Lady Ilchester," she called after him, "that I must go on alone in order not to be late for my sitting."

She then hurried on to meet Mr. O'Brien, who was near at

hand in a hackney coach. There was no time for the customary courtesies. She leaped into the carriage, and he shouted to the coachman to whip up his horses and drive with all speed to Covent Garden Church. He had arranged that a clergyman should be in attendance, and they were married at once. After the ceremony they went directly to Mr. O'Brien's villa in Dunstable, and Susan sat down to compose a letter to her parents.

The consternation and indignation of Lord Ilchester rivaled that of the Second Duke of Richmond under a similar provocation. He lamented the undutifulness of his daughter, and wailed loudly to all his friends about his outraged fatherhood, enlisting their support against the erring pair. His influence was reflected in the talk at Court and Assembly the next day; no one spoke up in defense of the lovers. The letter which a Mrs. Harris wrote her son from Whitehall typifies the general condemnation. "'Tis a most surprising event as Lady Susan has everything that was good and amiable—and how she got acquainted with this man is not to be accounted for." Mr. O'Brien was judged a common fortune hunter—"for they say," Mrs. Harris continued, "she sent him £200 a little time before. Everybody is concerned at this rash step. She is of age." Society unanimously pitied her father. "What a silly thing has Lady Susan Strangways done," the Duke of Devonshire wrote Garrick. "Lord Ilchester thought he had reasoned her out of it, and she had desired him to take her to the country. He is by all accounts most terribly affected by it."

Sarah was exceedingly upset. Three days after the elopement she poured out her reactions in a somewhat incoherent letter. In great stress of mind, she tried hard to collect her thoughts and to be as comforting as she could, for she suddenly realized that she loved Susan more than she had thought herself capable of loving anyone. But how could she sit down and write a collected letter full of good advice when she was beside herself with worry that Susan might suffer

for her indiscretion? Nevertheless, she would try. The effort caused her to confess much about her own marriage and wifely duties:

"I think Mr. Bunbury's love and attention would make me happy whatever happened to me. It don't prevent my feeling miserable at times as I now experience, but yet I think from what I feel myself you may experience great happiness. Don't, my dear, give away to your low spirits, not only yours but your husband's happiness depends so much on that, that you must get the better of yourself, and if you are inclined to be cheerful never think it wrong in your situation—for, as I told you, your whole business is to please him."

In those last phrases Sarah revealed her inherent talent for marriage, and one can read between the lines the restlessness and frustration which had resulted from Bunbury's failure to appreciate and respond to her aptitude. Susan's marriage promised a richer fulfillment, and Sarah chided her gently for complaining about Mr. O'Brien's humble villa in Dunstable: "As to your distress in changing house be above fear of that trouble. It only appears bad to you because you're melancholy. Don't make a misfortune of what is really none. Let things take their chance, if you can't succeed in what you undertake, give it up. You will learn in time—and there is no such misfortune if you don't know what to do. Mr. O'Brien will take all the trouble off your hands. He has nothing to vex him, and must exert himself to bring you by degrees to a situation of life that in my opinion is only different in idea from what you leave."

Half of Sarah's own faults, she realized, came from being too much at her ease. She needed to be in pursuit of something—it did not matter much what. Although she always wished for an occupation that would please Mr. Bunbury, he gave her very little encouragement, and so she was often idle and giddy. But Susan's situation was very different. She would never want occasions for pleasing Mr. O'Brien; conse-

quently she had only to learn some things and forget others.

Never, never would Sarah give her up. Susan need have no fear, Mr. Bunbury would not make any serious objection to their friendship. But perhaps it would be better to postpone their meeting, because Lord and Lady Ilchester needed her more, just then, than even her beloved. Susan must not be hurt by her silence; her Sarah would always love her and defend her, no matter how wrong she appeared.

The Ilchesters' ire against all those who countenanced their daughter's marriage put Sarah in a quandary. She did not quite know what to say to them, but she was determined not to add to their distress if she could avoid doing so. They had not actually asked her whether she was implicated in the elopement, but she knew that they suspected that Susan had consulted her. So she made a partial confession, and owned that she had tried hard to prevent Susan from taking so rash a step, and that she now believed it might turn out better than it had promised. She was determined not to tell them more, if she was not asked positively about it, "for it will do no good to anybody, and a great deal of harm to me in their opinion."

No one thought it unnatural in the father that he had stopped his daughter's allowance. Indeed, all of Susan's vast family connection were chiefly concerned by the possibility of encountering her play-actor husband. Worse still, she might expect them to entertain him, for her sake. Such an idea was preposterous! Clearly, there was only one solution—to ship the O'Briens to some remote corner of the globe as soon as possible.

Old Lord Holland was the only one who stood by his niece at this critical juncture. Remembering his own elopement and secret marriage, and the miseries he had endured at the hands of the Duke of Richmond, he promptly assured her £400 for three years, on condition that Mr. O'Brien should renounce his career and support his wife. Having risked his

irate brother's displeasure to this extent, Lord Holland was as eager as the rest of the family to get the newly-weds out of England. Accordingly, he promoted several schemes to find a sinecure for Mr. O'Brien. The post of consul at one of the seaports on the north coast of Africa was thought of, then a position in the East Indies was suggested. It was finally decided that a grant of lands on the Hudson River in North America should be obtained for him.

As the day of farewell approached, Charles Bunbury caviled at the intimacy between his wife and the O'Briens. He did not actually refuse to let Sarah bid Susan good-by; he just sulked and scolded. He made Sarah very uncomfortable, as he always managed to do when she was deeply attached. With her usual loyalty, she defended him to Susan. But her assertions of Mr. Bunbury's kindness and indulgence failed to convince anybody—least of all, herself.

In September, 1764, Mr. O'Brien and Lady Susan sailed from Falmouth for New York, and Sarah, knowing that nothing could supplant Susan's affectionate companionship, determined to crowd her hours with other distractions. In October she filled Barton with guests. She went every night to Bury, and every day to the meets. She found the race at Euston the prettiest. "I doated upon it for I rid on my beautiful Weazle, who was gentle enough to let me gallop backwards and forwards, so I saw the whole course." Charles, as usual, was "quite a determined horse racer," and Sarah found it very delightful to have all the pretty horses stabled at Barton. But in spite of all these diversions she could not keep her mind off Susan; she lamented the weeks that must pass before Susan's first letter should cross the Atlantic; she pressed everyone to tell her about New York.

The O'Brien marriage was still being criticised, and the gloomy prophets were not all intimate friends of Lord Ilchester. For William O'Brien had won wide recognition as a young actor of considerable talent, and his public lamented

his marriage quite as bitterly as did his wife's relations. One admirer printed some verses to him in the *News*, regretting that he had renounced a theatrical crown for the mere palm of love. Compelled, as Lady Susan's most intimate friend, to hear both sides, Sarah hoped that Mr. O'Brien might vindicate himself as a successful flax farmer. Yet she was very much afraid that he would grow tired of farming before his first crops were harvested.

To add to Sarah's distress, she was presently compelled to lecture Susan on her extravagance—for, in settling their accounts, Lord Holland had discovered that the O'Briens had lived far beyond their means while in England. Both he and Lady Holland were highly displeased; the latter had frightened Sarah by threatening never to countenance Lady Susan again. There was, however, one improvement in Susan's situation. Lady Ilchester showed signs of relenting towards her outcast daughter, and promised to pay £1000 toward settling her debts, "rather than give Lord Ilchester any uneasiness about it." Sarah had every reason to flatter herself that her tact in approaching the outraged parents immediately after the elopement had been a powerful factor in healing the breach between mother and daughter. She felt easier in her mind, but she would not be entirely relieved until she heard that the O'Briens were satisfactorily established in America.

In December she had her wish—a packet of letters from Susan. Their tone was not reassuring. Both O'Briens detested America. New York was so bad it could hardly be worse, and the New Yorkers were unpleasantly vulgar. Monstrously sorry to hear that Susan was still discontented, Sarah reminded her that since the town was so drab she could live the more easily on a shoestring.

A friend of Charles James Fox, whom she had met often as a schoolboy at Holland House, came down to Barton from Cambridge to spend Christmas of 1764. Sarah was surprised

at the suddenness with which Lord Carlisle had turned into a tall young man with singularly agreeable manners. His attention and politeness to women was quite unusual in a youth of sixteen. Feeling herself to be a sophisticated young married woman at nineteen, Sarah patronized and flirted with Frederick Howard, Fifth Earl of Carlisle, and soon reduced him to a state of utter adoration. Her stay at Lord Orford's proved another distraction. For a week she was charmed by the beautiful pictures, the house, the coursing, and the master. Lord Orford was a favorite with both Bunburies—one of the few enthusiasms they shared.

To vegetate at Barton all winter with her horses and dogs and dear cedar trees did not suit her restless mood at all. In January she prevailed on Sir Charles to open their house in Privy Garden. He could not protest because of the additional expense, for Sir William had died in June and he had succeeded to the title and estates. Sarah no sooner had her wish than she discovered again that she always missed Susan twice as much in London, and her spirits sank very low at times. Determined not to mope, she filled her days with company. When loneliness overtook her again, she scribbled page after page to Susan, cramming her letters with titivating gossip. Births, deaths, illnesses, marriages, scandals and divorces trickled from her pen. Without a doubt Susan in exile from the London world was vastly entertained by Sarah's comments, but after two hundred years they create a vapid impression, like that of a modern society page.

So the endless interchange of letters continued, and in all of them one can trace the outlines of Sarah's progressive disillusionment. It was especially hard for her to watch the happiness of others and to feel that life somehow was passing her by. Shy Miss Bunbury was contentedly in love with her good, simple fiancé, Mr. Soame. Charles James Fox was running after the Duchess of Hamilton, and his love was making a man of him. Her sister Caroline, ever devoted to her Henry,

watched tenderly over his declining health. The O'Briens, despite their extravagance and their financial wrangles with the Hollands, were getting on better—were, in fact, becoming popular in New York. And Sarah meanwhile was wasting her years in silly flirtations and endless gaiety. Apparently even Susan felt misgivings for her.

"It is ridiculous in you and I giving one another advice . . .," Sarah told her. "However, I think it proves very plainly how much we both want it, and that it's only one's partiality to oneself that prevents our saying the very thing to ourselves. Not but that, believe me, I have thought [about] it, and am as much displeased at my giddiness as anybody can be. But I flatter myself that with a little attention I shall have no reason to be angry with myself on this same subject—for I have thought very seriously lately and I don't see why I should behave like a silly vain fool when I am not one. You see I commend myself, but really I may say so much, when at the same time I own that my sense is of no use to me. I am ashamed to own it, and I think it so wrong that I do firmly intend to be more exact in my behaviour."

Sarah might resolve to be more sensible, but her present existence was too much for her good intentions. Caught in the stalemate of a loveless marriage, she envied her friend her happiness. And at the same moment Susan, who adored and was adored, discovered that love was not the whole of a woman's life and resented her exile and poverty. Realizing as she did the comfort of an assured position, Susan trembled for Sarah when she heard the latest news of the Bunbury menage. For her friends wrote her that while Sarah had been loyal and cheerful to an extreme, she was too sincere, too beautiful, and too fascinating to continue as a silent partner of a husband who ignored her. Sir Charles, they intimated, was a hopeless loss as a husband. And to what stormy eventuality did the barometer of Lady Sarah's emotional nature then point?



## IX

### *Paris in the Spring, 1765*

IN APRIL, Lady Holland invited Sarah and Louisa Conolly to accompany her to Paris for a short visit. Charles and Stephen Fox were included in the party, and Mr. Clotworthy Upton, familiarly known as "Tatty," would serve as Lady Caroline's courier. Lord Holland was not well enough to travel by coach, but he was to sail with them to Calais for the sake of the sea voyage.

Sarah had not been abroad since she had driven across France in her father's coach at the age of five. Of late years the war had prevented the British aristocracy from traveling on the continent, but since the signing of the peace treaty, scores of English milords and their ladies had been hastening across the Channel to Paris. Sarah had often implored Sir Charles to take her to the city that was regarded by all her friends and relatives as the most civilized and the liveliest capital in Europe. At one time her hopes had run high, when it seemed that her husband might be appointed Secretary of the Legation under Lord Weymouth. When the scheme fell through, she had redoubled her entreaties, to no avail. Now, Lady Holland's invitation dissipated a long pent-up disappointment.

In spite of the discomfort of the small packet boat, and the dirty inns, and the long coaching trip, everyone enjoyed the journey. Sarah and Louisa told each other how lucky

they were to see Paris for the first time under the wing of their sister Caroline. Lady Holland had been born and bred in the society which took its tone from Lord Chesterfield. He had laid it down as an eleventh commandment, to be kept much more religiously than the other ten, that a person of fashion should hold it a matter of duty to be on the best of terms with the greatest number of fine French ladies. As she had spent as much time abroad as had been possible, and as she had practiced this principle during each visit, the *beau monde* fairly doted on Lady Holland and were prepared to like anyone who belonged to her.

Without a doubt, Lady Holland instructed her sisters in the annals of the French peerage to while away the time on the journey. And, as she listened to her sister's stories about the faubourgs and the Court, Sarah began to sense the exhilarating atmosphere of French drawing rooms. There *bon ton* was the only law, and to be ridiculous the only sin. Apparently one was free to think or act as one chose in France, if one were careful to observe the conventions. Naturally, Sarah grew excited at the prospect of entering this new and unknown society in which every woman practiced flirtation as an art, and the men made a cult of gallantry.

Like many another Anglo-Saxon, Sarah fell in love with Paris at first sight. After the mists and fogs of London, the clear, luminous air made the Paris buildings seem incredibly beautiful. Even the common people on the streets, she declared, looked highly individualized and distinctive. The universal politeness and intelligence that one met with proved the adage that conversation among the French was an art in itself—as delicate and seasoned as their cuisine. It was a real amusement to drive about. But the shops were her despair, even though Sir Charles had tried to make up for refusing to go with her by lining her pocket book very generously indeed.

They were planning to go to the play, the art galleries, the

opera and ballet. Unfortunately, the Court was at Marly, and there would be no Assemblies during their stay. This was a pity, as the Court functions were the most stately in all Europe. They were all having too good a time to be disappointed, however; and Stephen and his Aunt Sarah—she was exactly his age—became tremendous pals. They hit it off so well that Charles ostentatiously declared he was jealous and sulked.

After a night at the opera, Sarah pronounced the singing a ridiculous imitation of the Italian, but she admitted that the dances and scenery were beautiful “beyond anything” she had ever seen. Being an accomplished actress, Sarah fancied herself also as a dramatic critic, and the greatest actor in the history of the British stage had made her standard an exacting one. It is not surprising that the only comedian in Paris who found favor in her eyes was Preselli, “the most like to Garrick of any actor.”

Sarah and Louisa went to St. Cyr one afternoon, and a nun told them that if they would kneel and pray to the relics of a certain saint they would have children. The Dauphine had not become a mother, the nun related, until she had prayed before the shrine. Both girls fell on their knees. “If we succeed,” Sarah wrote Lord Holland, “we will send the Duchess of Richmond there.” (The Duke of Richmond was later succeeded by his brother’s son.)

After a week or two in Paris, Sarah began to envy the bird-like grace of the French ladies. Her superb physique was an asset in the hunting field, but in these diminutive Parisian drawing rooms her height made her self-conscious. Louisa thought it a huge joke when Sarah hired a famous Paris dancing master to teach her deportment. But Sarah was in deadly earnest. She bit her lips so continually during her first lesson that her instructor told her she must leave off that abominable trick before he could attempt to teach her anything. But he soon had Sarah walking with such an air that Louisa

declared no one would know her for "the mean wretch she is at other times."

On arriving in Paris, Lady Holland had taken her sisters to pay their respects to the English Ambassador and his wife, the Earl and Countess of Hertford. The Ambassador had offered to arrange a visit to the Court at Marly. Lady Holland understood that her sisters would not be presented to the King; they would merely have the honor of watching him play at cards, and an opportunity to observe the beauties.

Their attendance at Court proved to be quite different from what they had been led to expect. The girls were presented to Louis the Fifteenth. As the daughter of a semi-royal duke, Sarah was entitled to the *Honneurs du Louvre*, accorded only to duchesses, wives of grandees of Spain, and a few other privileged ladies—a royal kiss. She was not entitled to a second kiss on the other cheek, but she got one. Describing the incident in a letter to Lord Holland, Sarah insisted that it was just "a Paris story" and not to be repeated. She then proceeded to tell him the rest of the yarn: "One of the Seigneurs said, '*en verité, c'est trop, Sire.*' '*Je ne sais si c'est trop, mais je sais que ça me plait,*' says the King." Louisa did not receive a similar tribute, but she bore her misfortune very well.

Charles Fox's precociousness amused them exceedingly. He had gone to France determined to be in love with a beauty, Mlle. Coislin, but he had since fallen in love with another lady. Now, the impudent toad was making love to both at once. When Sarah warned him he was too young for such schemes and would fail in both, he retorted that he trusted to the ladies' characters for his success; and Sarah reluctantly admitted that he was showing a shrewdness beyond his sixteen years.

The Parisian visit that had begun *en touriste* ended with an elevation to the dizziest heights. Sarah's success at Court, or Lady Holland's popularity, brought them an invitation

from Louis François, Prince de Conti. This Prince of the Blood, renowned for his discrimination, invited them to his little court at *L'Isle-Adam*, where he went each spring from *Le Temple*, in Paris. The château stood on an island formed by the Oise. One side rose sheer from the river, the other gave upon a park. In the midst of a bland, mellow landscape, the royal hedonist received all that was most distinguished and intelligent in Parisian society, and writers, artists, musicians, and scientists of note. He entertained them all with magnificent liberality, and Madame de Boufflers, a daughter of the Comte de Camper-Saugéon, did the honors. Horace Walpole etched the portrait of the Prince de Conti's mistress in a letter to Gray: "She is two women, the upper and the lower. I need not tell you that the lower is gallant, and still has pretensions. The upper is very sensible, too, and has a measured eloquence that is just and pleasing, but all is spoiled by an unrelaxed attention to applause. You would think she was always sitting for her picture to her biographer."

Sarah enjoyed her stay at *L'Isle-Adam*; the Prince was the most agreeable man that ever was. At forty-seven, he reminded her of her father's portrait. She and Louisa both doted on him, for there was no sort of attention that he did not show them—"and, indeed, he is the same to all his company."

The beauties, however, were somewhat of a disappointment. In Sarah's opinion there were very few good-looking women in Paris. The Duchesse de la Vallière, at fifty-two, was still the handsomest. Her face was still as beautiful as an angel's, and, as she hid her person with a cloak, she really looked only twenty-five. "The Princess of Monaco is reckoned a great beauty there; here she would be only a very pretty woman. Her face is round and flat, but her countenance is meek and sweet, her complexion very fine, and her figure the most perfect made of any woman in the world, I

believe. She is the only lady who don't wear rouge, for all the rest daub themselves so horribly that it is shocking." Madame d'Egmont, the next beauty, had a pretty, Chinese face, but her affectation detracted a good deal from her looks. Sarah's own favorite was the *Princesse de Chimay* whose unaffected sweetness and simplicity of manner were charming, even though she was not reckoned a beauty. Some people thought they resembled one another. Sarah could not see it in the least, although the likeness might well exist, since the Princess was the Duke of Fitz-James's daughter and therefore Sarah's cousin.

Their stay in Paris was all too short, and by June thirteenth Sarah was back in London. She found both her husband and Lord Holland involved in the King's quarrel with the Grenville administration.

A political deal was being made between the King and those in control of the House of Commons, in which the Bedford faction and George Grenville were forcing themselves into power. One condition was that the King's uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, be dismissed as Captain General, in order that the popular Marquis of Granby might take that office and deal with the weavers' riots then threatening the peace of London. The King refused and a counter term was offered, which he accepted—the expulsion of Lord Holland as Paymaster.

His family declared that Lord Holland cared very little about his dismissal. But Sarah thought the ministers "very bad" for showing such resentment and ingratitude, and "great fools" as well. The fact was that Lord Holland's dismissal put her in a very embarrassing position. Her husband was indebted to the Bedfords, and whether she approved of them or not, she was "very much with them." Indeed, Bunbury's adherence to the Bedford faction bore immediate fruit. Recalled to power, the Ministers displaced Lord Northumberland from his Lord Lieutenancy in Ireland and named

Lord Weymouth in his place, with Sir Charles Bunbury as his Secretary.

Sarah tried to convince herself that it was all for the best. Could it be that her racing enthusiast was a career man, after all? She could not help but be pleased, yet it disturbed her to think that her husband's opportunity was granted by the very men who had treated her dear brother-in-law so shabbily. Anxious that he might not doubt her loyalty, she wrote him that they would come to visit him as soon as Sir Charles's appointment was settled, and she reaffirmed her love for her "dear Lord Holland."

The appointment of Lord Weymouth, a man of degenerate and extravagant habits, was extremely unpopular in Ireland. Sarah's Irish relatives were not slow in warning her that her husband would suffer a cold welcome under the administration of such a chief, that as Madame Secretary, she, too, would be ill received. Lord Kildare actually wrote Sir Charles that he could not promise them "any intimacy." To Sarah, out of touch with the Irish political situation, Lord Kildare seemed to be the victim of "a strange whim." Very much vexed, she refused to believe that he would keep so unreasonable a resolution. "I hope not," she wrote Lord Holland, "for it will entirely destroy my pleasure there."

Her hopes and fears were both doomed to disappointment, for the King was negotiating through the Duke of Cumberland for a change in the Ministry. Sarah knew nothing of this, but the suspense of waiting for Charles's appointment and the malicious whispers with which it was greeted wore on her. In very low spirits, she apologized to Susan for a cross letter she had written her a few months before. She had totally forgotten what she had written, but recalled all too vividly that she had been in "a monstrous passion" at the time. It did not matter, because she had since changed her mind about a great many things. "I trust, however, my dear Netty, that you'll forgive me, for you know me too well not

to expect me to be always reasonable, or rather to know that when I am angry I am more absurd than anybody, for I write and say every nonsensical thing that enters my head. But I need not make myself uneasy about it, for I feel I love you too much to make it possible you can doubt it."

In July the Grenville Ministry fell, and Sir Charles's unfortunate appointment lapsed in consequence. Half disappointed and half relieved, Sarah invited Madame de Boufflers to Barton for the Newmarket races. They went to the midsummer meet "to see the sweetest little horse run that ever was. His name is Gimcrack, he is delightful. Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Grafton, and General Conway kissed hand the day that Gimcrack ran. I must say I was more anxious about the horse than the Ministry, which sounds odd, for Sir Charles loses £4000 a year by the Secretary's pay, but there was such numberless reasons to object to it that I am quite comforted for it."

The inauguration of the Rockingham administration spelled the end of her husband's prospects, but Sarah hoped that a place might yet be found for him under her brother, the Duke of Richmond, newly appointed Ambassador to Paris. No such place was found, or even talked of, for Sir Charles, and Sarah's restlessness augmented. Susan continued to be offended, in spite of Sarah's generous apology. At last, Sarah, eager to prove her devotion, went to stay with the Ilchesters at Melbury, but the visit made her even more unhappy about Susan than she had been before. Only Lady Ilchester mentioned her exiled daughter, but to Sarah, who spent many lonely hours staring dejectedly at the Ramsay portrait of Susan which hung in the chintz room where she lodged, Redlynch seemed haunted. At last she challenged the younger sisters concerning their affection for the absent one. Although Sarah said all that she could to open their hearts, they replied with cautious reserve.

Upon her return to town, another trial distressed her.



Emily Kildare's eldest son, Lord Offaly, had been taken with a consumption. Sarah saw that the boy was dying. For three weeks she "scarcely ever left him," and after his death she hurried to Ireland to comfort the Kildares.

Then, at last, her devotion to Susan reaped a rich harvest. Early in January Sarah received two letters from America; their long and somewhat obscure estrangement was ended. In an ecstasy of relief, Sarah declared that the pleasure she felt fully made up for all her suffering. Indeed, Mr. O'Brien's comment, that she and Susan were like lovers, was most apt. Since each needed the other so very much, let them agree never to speak of their quarrel again. "I named it to nobody but Sir Charles, who knows my countenance too well for me to impose upon him, and he could not avoid seeing that I was very unhappy . . ." Sarah's pent-up affection poured itself out in a very long letter. After "a pretty good bore upon dress," she quoted all the recent slang and catch phrases; described "the new importation of this year for young men," the season's crop of beauties; posted Susan on the recent gossip—in short, she recounted all the chit-chat she could think of.

Sarah spent the winter of 1766 alone at Barton. Sir Charles, who was sure that she would find a winter in the country as wearisome as he did, had promised to run down in February unless she joined him in town. After her hectic spring and summer, the country seemed sweet; she was glad to rest, and she thought first that she could enjoy her home in peace. She planned to read "a vast deal," and even took up drawing. But after living alone for a few weeks, and brooding, no doubt, on her husband's utter indifference, Sarah fell ill of a severe fever. Kind Mr. and Mrs. Soame hastened to Barton to take care of her. Sir Charles, however, pleaded "the nasty American business"—the riots caused by the Stamp Act—as an excuse for remaining in London. Sarah might try to put a good face on the matter, but at heart she felt neglected. If

he were not sufficiently frightened by her illness to come to her, her hold on her husband must be even slighter than she had supposed.

Eventually, since Sir Charles refused to join her, she was forced to give up the unequal struggle, and although she was far from well, she undertook the tiresome journey up to London. At Holland House, too, there was anxiety to trouble her. Fat Stephen's engagement to Lady Mary Fitzpatrick—"a little blessed angel"—was a source of joy to the family; but Lord Holland was giving them more and more concern. Public obloquy had made him "so touchy and peevish that the least contradiction hurts him," and the family was afraid that he had fallen victim to "some inward decay." Where, Sarah wondered, was all the old happiness of Holland House? Was it possible that she herself at nineteen was growing old? She rushed to the familiar looking-glass, and the answer was not reassuring. "My phiz remains," she wrote, "but my person is quite changed. As to my phiz it is grown to look older. I have less color, and my nose is grown long."

So she divided the summer of 1766 between Barton and Holland House. She presided over the company which filled her own dining room and of which young Lord Carlisle was an increasingly frequent member; she watched the silver pheasants and peacocks which came to feed around the door and flattered herself that the place had been vastly improved by her plantations. And then she would grow tired of this retired life and rush off to Winterslow, the seat of Stephen Fox in Wiltshire, where the family amused themselves acting plays—it was said, remarkably well. Even in her depression she could find pleasure in winding her precocious and impudent nephew, Charles, round her finger: "I have got Charles into such order that it's quite ridiculous. He toad eats me beyond all conception. I'm mighty proud of it, I can tell you, and the more so because he don't do so by Lady Mary, and says he is really afraid of me."

Lord Holland, too, did his best to cheer her up. Ill though he might be, he was still the patriarch and the presiding genius at Holland House. When he announced his intention of going to Naples for the winter, Stephen and Lady Mary, Charles, and Lord Carlisle agreed to accompany him and Lady Holland. He proposed that Sarah join them, and the prospect tempted her. "I own," she told Susan, "that when I am at Paris where we mean to be in October, I shall hardly be able to resist pursuing my journey if Sir Charles will agree to it, which I fancy he will, for he don't dislike the thoughts of it." Sarah dipped her pen and added, "You don't know perhaps that I am reckoned to govern him. I really think it is true, but I use very little art about it, and he is so very good and spoils me so much that he seldom refuses me; so that it comes to the same thing as being 'hen-pecked' as Lord Holland tells him, only that it is *fort flatteur* for me, that he should have the same indulgence for me now, as if I was not an old married woman."

Such was the flattering unction that Lord Holland—not perhaps without misgivings as to his own part in the marriage—laid to Sarah's soul, and such was the fiction that Sarah carefully maintained for the benefit of Susan and the outside world. In the midst of the round of entertainment whose pace she was ever increasing, in the midst of fantastic schemes for Susan's comfort (remembering that Susan lacked a hundred little pretties that were part and substance of her own luxurious life, Sarah was now proposing to ship lute-string dresses, French tea cups, and even a gray post chaise with silver mountings and a horse from the Barton stables across the Atlantic), she countered all of Susan's complaints with reminders of her blessings. Was not Mr. O'Brien "sensible, good tempered, amiable, constant—and the best husband in the world (I take it from yourself)? Is not this good luck?" And she kept protesting—protesting too much—that her own luck was no less good: "Believe me, good husbands

are not so common. At least I see none like my own, and your description of yours—from which I reckon we are the two luckiest women breathing, and that we do not deserve it, if we are not thankful for such a blessing every day of our lives, and that we can't reckon anything a real misfortune whilst we can be happy at home."

But however Lady Sarah might maintain the cheerful and co-operative spirit which is a wife's first duty, she could not hope to uphold alone the heavy burden of married life with one so flaccid and indifferent as Sir Charles Bunbury. With the project of her second journey to France there began a train of events which was to lead to Sarah's first act of rebellion and ultimately to marital disaster. From that disaster there could be no turning back.

## X

### *Gallic Interlude*

IN JANUARY, 1767, Sir Charles and Lady Sarah Bunbury went to Paris, accompanied by young Lord Carlisle. Their arrival created a flutter of interest in Parisian drawing rooms, and those who had made the acquaintance of Milady hastened to pay her their respects and to satisfy their curiosity concerning her husband.

The Bunbury menage conformed to the pattern of a successful marriage, according to the standard of these Parisians. Although Sir Charles was said to be more interested in the turf than in his lovely wife, he seemed a suitable and an indulgent husband. For was he not pleased to include young Lord Carlisle in his household? Lady Sarah's spirits were exuberant; one understood how it might suit her husband at times to delegate his duties as escort to another. Of course, anyone could see that the agreeable young Englishman was in love with Lady Sarah. But that was quite *de rigueur*, since her husband accepted the situation. Sir Charles did more; he actually encouraged the affair, as if he were obliged to Lord Carlisle for keeping his wife company.

One evening the Bunburys and their English coterie were gaming together at the *Palais Royal*, when, to everyone's distress, their odd, witty compatriot, George Selwyn, lost twelve hundred *louis d'or*. Lord Carlisle was as sad as Selwyn himself. But Sir Charles merely looked at his watch, and dis-

covering that it was an hour after midnight, his customary bedtime, he retired "with an apparently tranquil mind," leaving his Lady behind him. After observing his complacent detachment on several similar occasions, the French concluded that Sir Charles was not enjoying his stay in Paris excessively.

A score of gallants were always hovering about his wife. Sarah, now fully restored to health and beauty, was in a mood to encourage them, and she enjoyed a far greater success than she had on her first visit to Paris in 1765. At nineteen she had been anxious to acquire deportment, to learn the ways of the sophisticated French, and she had trailed in the wake of her sister, Lady Holland. Now she was an experienced matron of twenty-one, accompanied by a highly presentable husband and an attractive adorer. Two years of marital stalemate had increased her restlessness and her longing to be loved—or, *faute de mieux*, to be desired.

She was not disappointed. George Selwyn returned to London shortly and told Lady Mary Coke, an arch gossip, that Lady Sarah was much admired in Paris and had innumerable suitors, the most notable being the Duc de Chartres. Sarah's success was pronounced "prodigious" by Madame du Deffand, who wrote Selwyn: "All our youth and fashion have had their heads turned by her. Although she is not considered outstandingly beautiful, all the principals and divinities of The Temple"—where Sarah's friend, the Prince de Conti, lived when in Paris—"have taken her up and emulate her."

Madame du Deffand was anxious to meet the newly arrived English beauty. But when she did, Sarah defied the usually infallible analysis of the blind sibyl. Declaring that she was not yet sufficiently acquainted with the young woman to form a definite opinion, except that Lady Sarah Bunbury was admirable, sweet, lively, and polite, Madame du Deffand indulged in conjecture: "In our country she would pass for a coquette. I scarcely think she is one—she seeks diversion. She might well be flattered by the eagerness

with which she has been courted, but I suspect that she has yielded to it more for appearance's sake than from a genuine inclination. I suspect she has some secret motives, for I think she has sufficient intelligence to find our young gallants rather stupid."

Coquetry was "one of the worst faults," in the opinion of Madame du Deffand and other great French ladies. They were equally critical of indiscretions that outraged the conventions. But a discreetly conducted love affair was permissible. Indeed, it was essential to the reputation of a clever and attractive woman. Discretion, not virtue, was the criterion.

Although she was being made much of by the "divinities of the Temple," Sarah had not yet met the Prince de Conti's favorite. Armand de Gontaut, Duc de Lauzun, was on guard duty at Versailles. Yet the Prince was so taken with the young man that the Temple echoed his praise. Everyone said that Lauzun was a most attractive fellow, gay, witty, free, and superbly insolent, and everyone implied that no beauty could be sure of her niche in the Temple until she had found favor in Lauzun's eyes.

Rumors of Lady Sarah Bunbury's success in Paris also reached Lauzun in Versailles. He was curious about her, partly because he was bored by his mistress, Madame de Cambis, and partly because he felt it important to pass on the charms of each newcomer. On his first leave, he sauntered into the Temple. A concert was being conducted, but the Prince de Conti noticed him at once and greeted him with affection. Lauzun intimated his curiosity, and the Prince led him to Lady Sarah.

"I beg your kindness, Milady," said the Prince, "for my Lauzun. He is very wild, very extravagant, very pleasant. He will do you the honors of Paris better than anyone. Permit me to pay you his respects. I stand surety for his desire to win your favor."

Lauzun—according to his Memoirs, which are a testimonial of ungallant indiscretion—beheld a tall young woman with a rounded, full figure, “her hair of the most elegant black and of perfect growth; her bosom of a dazzling whiteness and fresh as rose leaves.” He looked too boldly. Sarah dropped him a curtsy and muttered a punctilious reply to her host “between her teeth.” Lauzun, knowing himself to be the target of innumerable eyes, and rejoicing in the exquisite brocade that had been cut to set off his slight, but closely knit figure and well turned calf, bowed as if completing a tiresome social chore. It became his immediate concern to pay his respects to several other women in the audience.

Madame de Cambis interrupted his salutations to summon him to her side. Ever polite, he bent over her chair to catch her whispers, apparently flattered that his elegant mistress was at such pains to let all the world know that he belonged to her. Hosts of unsuccessful imitators pressed around him to learn his verdict on the new English beauty.

“She is not bad,” he said, speaking loud enough to be overheard, “but I do not see anything in her to turn a man’s head. If she spoke good French, and came from Limoges, no one would give her a thought.”

A burst of laughter rewarded this fatuous remark. Madame de Cambis was particularly amused. “He is quite right,” she declared, “and he puts it charmingly!”

Indeed, Madame de Cambis’ self-esteem was so reassured by Milady’s fall from the skies that she could not resist telling Lauzun how she had named him to Lady Sarah as a man whose attentions might be flattering to a woman who wished to be sought after. With a deplorable lack of tact, Madame de Cambis intimated that she had made no secret to Milady of her own rights over the Duke.

Such pretension on the part of a mistress whom he despised because she had become his without the excitement of a conquest, was insufferable. Lauzun was furious, and his



indignation increased as he realized that Madame de Cambis was responsible for Lady Sarah's frigid greeting.

When supper was announced, the Prince, a master in pulling the strings, bade Lauzun take his place at table between Madame de Cambis and Lady Sarah Bunbury. The Duke was not pleased. He was angry with his mistress, and he imagined that Milady was still smarting under the gale of laughter he had raised at her expense. He expected an uncomfortable hour between two cold shoulders. But Sarah was determined on a more subtle revenge—it would be vastly amusing to subjugate this famous fop! Sparkling with mischief, she brought all her skill in fascination to bear on the Duke.

Soon his interest in the fair stranger became so noticeable that Madame de Cambis grew restive. She sighed audibly, and strove to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*. But her recent triumph was doomed. The Duke ignored her signals of distress, and addressed himself to her rival with ever-increasing admiration. Before the evening was over, Lauzun discovered that Lady Sarah Bunbury had captivated him completely.

"I could think of nothing else," he relates in his Memoirs. "I made friends with her husband. I paid him attentions for which he was grateful, and found a way of establishing myself in their household."

Lauzun had never pursued an English woman before, but instinct prompted him to win Sarah's friendship. Grateful to him for his courtesies to her husband, flattered by his admiration for herself, she soon received him on an intimate and friendly footing. Sir Charles, she confided, had missed his exercise sadly. Now that the Duke had so kindly introduced him to the *jeu de paume*, he was not half so difficult. Dear Charles, she was afraid, did not enjoy Paris as much as she could wish.

Never a laggard in love, the Duke overestimated Sarah's friendliness. At the first opportunity he whispered a declara-

tion. Sarah appeared not to hear it. He wrote, and his letter was returned to him. Greatly in the fashion—a man whose favor made women feel it an honor to be dishonored—Lauzun was nonplused. Such a rebuff had not been given him since early boyhood. He consoled himself with the reflection that no great harm had been done, since Lady Sarah continued to treat him with unaffected friendliness.

She chose the first favorable occasion, however, to speak her mind. "I do not wish to have a lover," she said, casually. "Imagine whether I can have a French lover, who is as bad as ten others by the scandal he creates and the trouble he causes! And you, especially, *Monsieur le Duc!*" Then, before he could take offense at her teasing, she added, "You do me too great an honor."

Lauzun protested, and declared himself with all the ardor at his command.

Without the least trace of anger, yet with firmness, she replied, "Do not waste your time on me. Do not speak of love, unless you wish me to bar my door to you."

Lauzun wisely decided to keep his own counsel and wait for better times. He was too genuinely in love to take offense, and all was not lost so long as Lady Sarah continued to admit him on an intimate footing.

Soon Madame de Cambis grew angry at his neglect. She wrote him that he must choose between herself and Lady Sarah Bunbury. Lauzun was not long in making his choice. He made a packet of her letters and sent them back to her without a word. Madame de Cambis was equally prompt in proclaiming their rupture. That same evening she consoled herself for her loss by taking a new lover, and she chose a man whom she knew Lauzun detested, the Chevalier de Coigny.

Although Lady Sarah had pronounced his passion hopeless and had forbidden him to mention it, Lauzun was too adept in love to neglect the opportunity to advance his suit. Lady

Sarah would be certain to hear that he had sacrificed a talented and fashionable mistress for her sake. No woman, in Lauzun's estimation, was immune to the flattery of so sincere a tribute.

Little by little, Lauzun's tact and restraint bore fruit. Lady Sarah's manner to him altered perceptibly. At first, she had seemed merely flattered to have caught an admirer so brilliant and so universally desired. Now he sensed that she was beginning to like him for his own sake. Sometimes, when he was conversing with her on her own strict terms, she hinted her sympathy for his suffering. Her sighs seemed to imply more than mere gratitude for his good behavior. He hoped she was falling a victim to sentimental regret.

For her part, Sarah was delighted to let the flirtation simmer along in this highly agreeable fashion. Then suddenly Lauzun failed to appear at the usual hour. Several days passed, and still no Lauzun. Sarah was perturbed. Had she offended him? Was he ill? Upon asking their mutual friends, she learned that none of them had seen Lauzun. It was rumored that he had shut himself up in his own house, overcome with grief at the misfortunes of Madame de Stainville.

The rumor was disquieting, for a number of reasons. In the first place, the lady had once been Lauzun's mistress. Although that scandal was now an old story, it was well known that a tender friendship still existed between the two. They were not only former lovers but intimate connections by marriage bound together by a devious and inextricable web of intrigue.

Lauzun's father, the Duc de Gontaut, a favorite of Madame de Pompadour and an influential figure at court, and Étienne François de Choiseul-Stainville, afterward the famous Duc de Choiseul, had married sisters, and marriage had brought them into close alliance. Furthermore, a very extraordinary relationship existed between the Duc de Choi-

seul and his sister, the Duchesse de Gramont; he was, as Lauzun informs us without the flicker of an eyelash, her lover. And this incestuous tangle had become even more complicated when the Duchesse de Gramont began making sheep's eyes at young Lauzun. But Lauzun had already fallen in love with the wife of the Duc de Choiseul's younger brother, the Comte de Stainville, nor was the incestuous Duc unaffected by the charm of the young Comtesse. Out of this almost farcical cat's cradle of intrigue were to rise hatred and passion and revenge of a tragic intensity.

Lauzun, at the time of his affair with the Comtesse de Stainville, was a sophisticated, insolent, intelligent, and thoroughly corrupt individual. He had spent his childhood in the lap of Madame de Pompadour, and as soon as his tutor had taught him his letters, he had been employed in reading aloud to her. At twelve he had been placed in a regiment of the Guards, the reversion of which the King had promised him. "I realized at that age," he says in his Memoirs, "that I was destined to enjoy an immense fortune and the finest position in the realm without being obliged to take the pains to deserve them." His attractive appearance and his exaggeratedly romantic sensibility, which he attributed to endless novel reading in his childhood and which he retained in later life, made him a tempting conquest for all kinds of women. He had profited by "delicious lessons" with several—ladies of the court, servants, actresses, a cousin of Madame de Pompadour—when he fell in love with Madame de Stainville. Nor did his loveless *mariage de convenance* to Amélie de Boufflers dispose him to end his education in sentiment. His bride, according to Madame du Deffand, was nothing but a little bird, whose endless conversational chirpings never amounted to anything, and Lauzun continued to visit Madame de Stainville in secret even after his marriage.

That lady, perceiving the jealous hatred of the Duchesse de Gramont, at length took fright. Too many obstacles and

dangers threatened their love, she said, and she withdrew her favors. Lauzun accepted her ultimatum philosophically, and in a few months he had become only her friend, "but the most affectionate of friends and almost as affectionate as any lover could be." He consoled himself with an actress and finally with Madame de Cambis, whom he had summoned to Versailles in a burst of extravagant ennui and who, to his astonishment, arrived within four hours. All this time he was also paying court to the King and he spent many hours hunting with him. Abundant gaiety, great activity, and the ability to do without sleep made it possible for him "to attend to everything," and nothing, he declares, could have been pleasanter than his way of life.

Such was Lauzun when he met Lady Sarah Bunbury—and lost his heart. Why, then, had he suddenly deserted her? Obviously, he knew how to make women fond of him, and he had been waiting on Sarah every day until his sudden disappearance. Sarah must have known that even after his break with Madame de Cambis he had other strings to his bow, but she had not thought of Madame de Stainville as one of them. Now everyone was saying that Lauzun's disappearance and the fate of his former mistress were mysteriously linked.

For that lovely and indiscreet woman had encountered the fate of all those who rebelled against the convention of the *ancien régime*. Like Susan Fox-Strangways, she had outraged society by falling in love with an actor, but her punishment had been far more severe. On the very day when she had been expected to appear in a ballet at the Hotel Brancas (the residence of Madame de Mirepoix), her husband had taken her to Nancy; at the King's command—and perhaps at the instigation of Madame de Gramont—he had shut her up in a convent. Madame de Stainville had refused to renounce her love for the actor, Clairval; she had confided her papers to Lauzun, and dared the family to do their worst. The Duc de Choiseul, whose passion had not been reciprocated, and the

jealous Madame de Gramont now itched to get their hands on the incriminating letters which were simmering like a time bomb in Lauzun's closet. They persuaded the Duc de Gontaut to attempt a theft, which was unsuccessful and which nearly resulted in Lauzun's shooting his own father. The next day Lauzun's elders reproached him with having been in Madame de Stainville's confidence and with abetting her in her scandalous passion. Choiseul demanded the letters and Lauzun bluntly refused to give them up. His father tried to exercise his authority, and a quarrel ensued which ended in a complete rupture.

Such was the tale which Lauzun unfolded to Sarah when at last he reappeared in the Bunbury menage. She was shocked by his appearance. His pale, drawn face had lost the vivacious insolence which one sees in his portrait, and his look of profound dejection moved her to express her concern.

"I am," he sighed, "as wretched as it is possible for a man to be. I am losing, in a horrible manner, a woman who is very dear to me—and I shall never be anything to her whom I adore."

Sarah was deeply impressed by her adorer's loyalty to the trust imposed in him. Was it not proof of tender feeling in one whom half the world dubbed a coxcomb? Indeed, tenderness was all that he had seemed to need to make him irresistible, and now his appearance proved that he could suffer for a friend's misfortune. Sarah's growing interest seemed suddenly justified, and Lauzun must have seen in her eyes an emotion which was something more than compassion. He was about to take advantage of her mood when a visitor was announced, and Sarah had just time to whisper that she was supping that night at Madame du Deffand's.

Lauzun had not been to Madame du Deffand's for several years, probably because the old lady disliked him. But, by good luck, his mother-in-law, Madame de Luxembourg, hap-

pened to be supping there that evening. He managed to have himself and his wife included in the party.

Madame du Deffand was disappointed at first because the Prince de Conti and "the Idol"—her nickname for Madame de Boufflers—failed to appear. But her company of thirteen, adorned by four lovely ladies—Lady Sarah, Madame Chauvelin, Madame d'Henlin, and Madame de Lauzun—made a congenial gathering. As the new favorite, Sarah came under her blind hostess's keen scrutiny, and was pronounced most amiable, her manners sweet and animated. In fact, Madame du Deffand was pleased with both Bunburys, beyond measure. The baronet, she said, was an excellent fellow.

As the evening wore on, Lauzun became aware that Sarah's manner to himself had altogether changed. Her eyes, fastened upon his, told him a hundred things which he dared not interpret other than as pity for his recent suffering. When, at last, he drew her into a *tête-à-tête*, her vivacity melted into a gentle languor. Her mood delighted him, since he had reason to believe that he was the cause of it.

When the company was taking leave of Madame du Deffand, Sarah went to the desk and scribbled three words on a scrap of paper. As she went downstairs she slipped it into his hand and whispered, "Read this when you go to bed."

Lauzun rushed home, and eagerly held her note to a light. To his dismay, Sarah had written three short words in English—and he could not understand one! "I l-o-v-e y-o-u," he spelled out. It seemed that this must mean "*Je vous aime*," but he dared not flatter himself so much. He tossed and turned in an agony of suspense all night. At six in the morning he could bear it no longer, and dashed out to buy an English dictionary. Needless to say, it confirmed his hopes. His joy knew no bounds, and as soon as he thought Sarah might be awake he hurried to the Bunburys' apartment.

She received him with a charming grace. "I have risen betimes," she explained, "for I had no doubt that you would

come to ask me for breakfast. Let us begin with breakfast. Dismiss your cabriolet, or people will see that you are here, for I mean to bar my door to everyone so that we can talk without being interrupted. Sir Charles is at the tennis court, and so is my Lord Carlisle, and they will not come home until dinner time."

This is very characteristic of Sarah—her sisters often teased her about her appetite—and, indeed Lauzun's account of their conversation is convincing throughout.

As they took breakfast, she chatted casually—for the servants' benefit. Then, giving out that she was not at home, she led Lauzun into an adjoining room.

After carefully closing all the doors, Sarah addressed him more in sorrow than in rapture. "I love you, Monsieur de Lauzun, and, seeing you very unhappy and very sensitive, I have been persuaded of your love, and have been unable to resist the pleasure of assuaging your sorrows by making a confession of my own."

At these words, Lauzun repressed an impulse to take her in his arms. He loved her far too much to risk his sudden happiness by being importunate.

Sarah sighed deeply, and continued: "Ordinarily, a lover is barely an event in the life of a French woman, but it is the greatest event of all for an English woman. From that moment, everything is changed for her, and the loss of her existence and of her repose is commonly the end of a sentiment which in France has none but agreeable consequences and involves little danger. This certainty, however, does not always restrain us. As we choose our husbands, it is less permissible to us not to love them, and the crime of deceiving them is never forgiven us—"

Lauzun, as men will in these circumstances, assured her of his discretion. "No one will ever know of our love," he promised.

Sarah's objections took another form. "I might add that I



feel a genuine remorse for showing such ingratitude for the kindness of Sir Charles, who has made my happiness his principal occupation." Lauzun must have raised his eyebrows at this obvious falsehood, which, if it had been true, denoted an unexpectedly bourgeois attitude, but Sarah went on: "I take pleasure in saying to you—I love you! But, I am none the less convinced that we need expect nothing but unhappiness from our love. Our nations are always divided by the sea, and often by war. We shall pass the greater part of our lives without meeting one another, and our destiny must incessantly hang upon a lost or intercepted letter."

What lover in hot pursuit was ever deterred by an undeclared war? Lauzun probably burst into such a torrent of burning words that Sarah was inspired to tease him a little. "We have everything to fear from my Lord Carlisle," she confided, wickedly. "He is in love with me. He has long been reasonable, because he thinks it impossible that I should have a lover. But jealousy will very soon open his eyes, and make him capable of anything."

Lauzun exploded. Ah, that, for example, that was too much! Why should he, a man of fashion, make way for that lanky British mooncalf? Was his adored Lady Sarah a trifler with men, a coquette?

"I must also speak to you of my own character," Sarah went on, smoothly—as if he had just reminded her of a painful duty. "Yes; I am by nature a coquette. I will sacrifice my coquetry to you with pleasure, if it rests with me. But your jealousy"—and the veiled look she threw him intimated that he had just convicted himself of that highly troublesome characteristic—"might bring unhappiness to us both." Lauzun looked so contrite, so humiliated, that she added, hastily, "I have too good an opinion of you to take into account the risk of surrendering my honor and my happiness to your honesty and discretion. But, judge whether I should—whether I *can* have a lover?"

Lauzun looked into her eyes and saw that she loved him. But this long rigamarole—this preamble—was it perhaps a convention among British ladies, a kind of aperitif to love? Well, he could afford to wait. "I wish," he replied, meekly, "that you should be happy. But there is no power in the world that can prevent me from adoring you." He kissed her hand, and agreed to the pledge that she exacted—that neither of them would depart from the strictest circumspection and prudence.

Their discretion availed them nothing. All the world delights in a romance, and this pair were of such a gaiety and charm that the *beau monde* was keenly interested, and inclined to treat their affair with indulgence.

Towards the end of January, Madame du Deffand summed up the current opinion in a long letter to Horace Walpole: "Your little Lady Sarah is still with us. She was to go Monday last at eight in the morning, and her tame Lord and Monsieur de Lauzun with her, not to part till Chantilly, perhaps not till Amiens. But she was not well, and now is to leave Saturday. On Friday she is going to see Mlle. Clairon play *Roxane* at Madame de Villeroy's. Doubtless her Lord and Monsieur de Lauzun will be of her party just the same. Sir Charles Bunbury is most courteous in his recognition of the hospitality they have received. I can only say to you that I find her very much a coquette, and also that Monsieur de Lauzun sees her three times a day. No young woman of our world could behave as she does without being much talked about. However, the note among people here is rather one of astonishment than scandal. She pleases, has *naïveté*, a caressing manner, is quite likable. But she distinctly has not a sound good taste. Her Lauzun is a fool who plays the part of a giddy young man. He wouldn't ever have undertaken this affair with her except for the sake of telling all the world about it all. She is all off with the Duc de Chartres. He made the running for a while, but then so did twenty others. Lau-

zun holds the field, and I don't think she minds that much one way or the other. He seems rather a blind and shield for her affair with Lord Carlisle, so that she sees him only to put the world off the scent. Her good Baronet seems to think that both look alike to him."

Thus spoke one of the shrewdest commentators in Paris to her colleague in London. Her diagnosis was wrong; Sarah was not using Lauzun as a shield for Carlisle, she was doing the exact opposite. But Madame du Deffand was quite right when she said that there was no cause for scandal. Sarah was still a virtuous wife, for Lauzun says that although she loved him warmly, she granted him nothing. His confessions are so indiscreet that when he admits frustration, one believes him.

The Frenchman was on tenterhooks. Watching Carlisle, he came to the conclusion that the Englishman would "say nothing, in the hope that Lady Sarah would forget me as soon as she leaves France." He took the greatest pains to keep on good terms with Sir Charles—which, as Lord Carlisle could have told him, was easier than he supposed.

Sarah was enjoying her success vastly. Surrounded by a score of admirers whenever she appeared in society, it amused her to encourage the Chevalier de Coigny, who had begun to give himself great pains to win her favor, and great airs to make people think he had won it. Poor Madame de Cambis was forsaken for the second time on Lady Sarah Bunbury's account. The rumor was highly flattering, and as the Chevalier was pleasant and attractive, his pretensions diverted Sarah. So did Lauzun's vain efforts to hide the fact that he was dying of jealousy.

She allowed Lauzun to suffer for a time. Then, one day when he had taken breakfast with her and seemed very sad, she took pity on him. She rang the bell, and said to the domestic, "Understand that I am never at home to Monsieur le Chevalier de Coigny, upon any pretext." As soon as they were

alone again she threw her arms round Lauzun's neck, and gazed at him with all the graces at her command. "You have taught me, my dear," she murmured, "that a woman may find great pleasure in foregoing the homage of other men when she is in love with one, and one only."

On the fourth of February, Madame du Deffand was surprised to learn that the Bunburys were still in Paris, and she determined not to let them depart without charging them with a little package of books and letters for her dear friend Horace Walpole. As she occupied herself with the speeding of her bundle, she speculated about the state of affairs in the Bunbury menage. She could not rid herself of the idea that Lord Carlisle was the cause of Sarah's giddiness: "I am persuaded that she loves him, and that idea makes me pardon many things in her conduct that I have found neither sensible nor in good taste without this motive."

Possibly Sarah did not accept the commissions with that degree of patience which the fussy old lady felt she was entitled to. Irritated, perhaps, by a feeling that the younger woman had been lacking in courtesy, Madame du Deffand grumbled that Lady Sarah Bunbury did not seem fully to appreciate the advantages she had enjoyed while in Paris through the favor of that great personage, the Prince de Conti. As her enthusiasm for Sarah waned, her affection for the baronet increased. "The poor Sir Charles!" Ah, *him* she loved with all her heart. He was so sweet, and simple, and childlike—and so terribly in love with his wife. One must suppose that Lady Sarah appreciated her paragon more than she appeared to do.

While the old woman clucked ominously about the Bunburys' marital maladjustment, the object of her concern continued to be either complaisant, or unaware of the rising passion between Lauzun and his wife. When the hour of de-

parture drew near, Sir Charles pressed both Carlisle and Lauzun to accompany them a part of the way. Both accepted with alacrity.

The party stopped for the night at Pont-Sainte-Maxence by Chantilly. A single candle illuminated a room that was both dark and dirty, as were almost all the inns of France. Sir Charles sat writing. Lord Carlisle, his head buried in his hands, seemed to be plunged in the profoundest meditations. Sarah, too, seemed out of sorts. Presently she rose to go to her chamber, but turned in the doorway and beckoned to Lauzun to follow her.

An old serving woman who had been with Sir Charles since his childhood intercepted the signal. She devoured Lauzun with a look of hatred that pierced him to the marrow. Shaken, but undeterred, he contrived to steal a few minutes alone with his beloved. When they parted, Sarah was crying, and a few tears rolled down his own cheeks.

On going to his room, Lauzun found that he was to share it with Lord Carlisle. The young Englishman was pacing up and down, tortured by jealousy. At the sight of his rival, Lord Carlisle, unable to contain himself any longer, proposed a duel upon their return to Paris. Knowing that Sarah returned his love, Lauzun was in a mood to handle Carlisle with extreme moderation. He tactfully intimated to the overwrought young man that it would be more gallant to postpone picking a quarrel until they could fight a duel without compromising Lady Sarah.

As Lauzun was under orders and could not be absent from France without leave, he was compelled to say good-by to his love at Arras. At the last moment, Lord Carlisle wisely decided not to leave the person who was so dear to him. To Lauzun's disgust, he continued on to England with the Bunburies instead of returning to Paris and proceeding to Italy as he had intended.

In a "most wretched state," Lauzun mounted a horse and

rode back to Paris. Jealousy and love ravaged him like a malignant fever. By her own confession, Sarah was a coquette; and Carlisle would certainly do his best to make her forget her Lauzun. His only comfort was the letter Sarah had entrusted to him for the Prince de Conti imploring leave of absence for her lover "lest he come to England without leave, and lest such action involve him in serious consequences."

Lauzun had not ridden far before another letter from Sarah overtook him. It calmed him immeasurably. "You have utterly changed my heart, my friend. It is sad and broken, and although you hurt me so, I can have no thought save for my love. I had no idea that such a thing could happen, and I imagined myself too proud, too virtuous, for my happiness ever to depend on a French lover. The wind is against us, and I am not sorry. It is better to be in the same country. I shed copious tears. I told Sir Charles that I had a headache, and he was satisfied with that. Lord Carlisle did not believe it, for he gazed at me very seriously. Heavens! All this that I am doing must be very wicked, since I try to conceal it, and I, the most truthful woman living, am obliged to lie and to deceive two people whom I esteem so highly! They are gone out, and I have chosen to stay indoors to write to him who is dearer to me than the repose which I have lost for his sake. I dare not send my letter to the post by one of our servants"—perhaps Sarah too had caught the venomous looks of Sir Charles' old nurse. "I have appealed to the waiter in this inn. He has an honest, kindly face. He promises that he will be careful and say nothing to anybody. I should be utterly ruined were he to betray me. Everything vexes and tires me, and so it must be until I can see you. Come as soon as you can without imprudence, for I forbid you to do anything that you may have cause to regret. Obtain leave of absence. Monsieur le Prince de Conti is extremely friendly to you and will help you. Come, so as by your presence to fill your mistress with the greatest joy to which she can look forward. I have no fear

of your not understanding my ridiculous French. Your heart and mine will always understand each other. Adieu—for I am afraid of being taken by surprise. Remember that it is for you alone that there exists your, Sarah.”

Difficult it is to simulate another’s personality in a letter. Certainly, Lauzun’s talents were not of this description. This epistle, printed by Lauzun in his *Memoirs*, has all Sarah’s natural forthrightness and common sense, and comparison with her other letters denotes the authenticity of this. Even under the stress of extreme emotion, she could not forget, as she poured out her mood in a rush of words, that her lover was in danger from his own reckless impetuosity.

The Prince de Conti was extremely partial to Lauzun, and he considered the new lady love worthy of his favorite’s attentions. “At the end of a fortnight, my Lauzun,” the Prince promised, “you will obtain leave to go to England.”

Overjoyed, Lauzun confided his good fortune to Madame du Deffand. This was a curious impulse on his part, as he was no favorite of hers—but he remembered that the old blind woman had shown kindness to Lady Sarah. Was it not in this very drawing-room, with the old lady seated in her great tub of an armchair, that he had received from his mistress the note which told him that he was successful?

“Madame,” he began, “by this time Lady Sarah is in England, and she will have delivered your packet to Sir Horace Walpole.”

She wanted to know if he were quite sure.

“Yes, Madame. I accompanied *les Bunburys* to Arras, and have just returned from there on horseback.”

Declaring that she was touched by his attention, Madame du Deffand took pains to make herself agreeable. If she were tactful, he might reveal interesting sidelights. Before he left her, Lauzun had confided that he was hoping to set out for London in a fortnight. This news was too good to keep. On

February fifteenth she wrote Horace Walpole an account of their conversation, concluding, maliciously, "I hope you won't have to do him the honors, and that you won't have him on your hands for long." And in a later note—carried in fact by Lauzun himself—"leave him to his Milady," she advised.

Waiting for the return post which would tell her of Lauzun's reception in London, she amused herself by berating the young man. "If our Leander should have been drowned in the sea, I doubt that your Hero would have thrown herself into the Thames." Sarah came in for a share of scolding: "Your little Milady may be amiable, but she must lack wit or taste. Just look at the person she drags around after her."



## XI

### *The Adored Mistress*

SARAH GREETED Lauzun in a manner to increase his love still further—had that been possible. Yet he had little opportunity at first to press his suit. The Comte de Guerchy, the French Ambassador, was a man of formal habit, and he insisted on ceremonies of presentation. During the official visits and receptions, the fashionables studied the Duke with discreet curiosity, for Horace Walpole had not scrupled to repeat the gossip Madame du Deffand had written him, and everyone knew that Lauzun had come to London for love of Lady Sarah Bunbury.

Lady Mary Coke saw him one evening at the French Embassy. As she was going downstairs she met Lauzun coming up. Although he had just attended Lady Sarah to her chair, he had the politeness to do the same for Lady Mary. But his manners gained him no credit in that quarter. With her customary waspishness, she observed that courtesy signified nothing in a Frenchman. "He has no advantage in his person," she noted in her diary on February twenty-second, "which is neither agreeable nor in the least conveys the idea of his being of one of the most considerable families in France, and heir to one of the greatest fortunes. Lord Dillon told me he was sure he would not have less than fifty thousand pounds a year English. He married lately the heiress of

the Duc de Boufflers, a young lady of sixteen years of age and in all respects amiable; but his attachment to my Lady Sarah seems as if he were insensible to her merit."

To the lovers it seemed as if the Comte de Guerchy would never end the formalities, as if Lauzun's short leave would be up before they could escape from the world. In this dilemma, Sarah tactfully suggested to Sir Charles that they should give their French friend a taste of English country life. He agreed readily; no husband was ever more indifferent, surely, or less affected by a similar situation.

On the morning set for their departure, Lauzun went round to the house in Privy Garden. He was ushered into a room occupied by a man "who resembled nothing so much as a great ostler." When the Bunburys appeared, he was presented to this person "as to one of the family." To Lauzun's further astonishment, this Major General Charles Lee, a cousin of Sir Charles who later disgraced himself with the Americans at Monmouth, proved to be the guest of honor, and took his place in Lady Sarah's post chaise. Lee's manners were crude. "At the first post he complained to Sir Charles that his wife bored him, and they put us together. At the second post he complained that the Frenchman bored him even more than the lady; he then rode with Sir Charles, whom he left half an hour later for a meet of foxhounds where he had caught sight of somebody of his acquaintance."

After a few days at Barton, Sir Charles, who could never abide the country except during the racing season, withdrew to a more congenial milieu: He left his wife alone with Lauzun for three weeks. "The time that I spent at Barton," Lauzun declares in his Memoirs, "was certainly the happiest of my life."

Sarah was torn by conflicting emotions. In love with Lauzun, she knew that her husband must be aware of her temptation. Sir Charles was very kind to her—but increasingly

apathetic. She was starved for love, and Lauzun adored her. Still, she hesitated. Showing him the most tender affection, she allowed him no favors.

Lauzun describes her vacillation with his usual lack of reticence. "At length, one evening, she told me that I might come down to her chamber when the household were gone to bed. I awaited this longed-for moment with the utmost impatience. I found her in bed, and supposed that I might take a few liberties. She appeared so offended and distressed by them that I did not persist. She allowed me, however, to lie down beside her, but she required of me a moderation and reserve of which I thought I should die. This charming torment continued for several nights. I had ceased to hope for consummation, when, clasping me on one occasion with the liveliest ardor, she gratified all my desires."

Convinced, at last, that Lauzun was truly devoted, Sarah explained her fears and vacillations. "I did not wish my lover," she confessed, "to take anything from me by force, or to owe anything to my frailty or to his want of respect for me. I wished him to receive everything from my love. I give myself to you. Yes. Your Sarah is all yours."

As she had told him in Paris when she first confessed her love, she was incapable of giving herself lightly. From that moment everything would be changed for her. On taking a lover she would be ready to risk the loss of her existence and of her repose. The disappointment of her marriage had not destroyed Sarah's idealism in regard to love, and now that her surrender was complete, she longed to sacrifice everything for Lauzun's sake. She whispered that she could never be content until she shared his life completely.

Probably, Lauzun evaded the issue—with renewed ardor. In any case, Sarah was not quite sure of him. A certain complacency in his bearing indicated that now that she had become his mistress, he might be content to leave matters as they were. Her uncertainty became intolerable.

One morning when they were riding together she turned to him impulsively. "Do you," she implored, "love me more than anything in the world?"

"Oh! As for that, yes," he replied without hesitation, and with the certainty that he would never repent what he was saying.

"Very well!" she continued, "Are you willing to forsake everything to fly to Jamaica with no thought but for the happiness of your mistress?"

Lauzun was nonplused. "Jamaica?" he stammered, "Why Jamaica?"

"Because I have a wealthy kinsman there, with no children. I am sure of his friendship and indulgence," Sarah explained. "He will give us an asylum with pleasure."

Sarah saw that her lover was at a loss for a reply. "Wait," she told him, "I do not wish to hear your answer for a week." She gathered up the reins and led off at a gallop.

Granted a reprieve without further embarrassing questions, Lauzun made the most of it. When his week was up, he was ready with an answer. He regretted none of the sacrifices which would probably cost another man dear, but he could not conceal from himself that Lady Sarah was coquettish and fickle. At the world's end, with no position, no social life, she would become wretched. She would complain she would reproach him with her ruin, and they would both be in hell. The prospect was positively alarming.

When he confided his fears to Sarah, she received them somewhat coldly. "It is well, my friend," she answered. "You are more prudent, you have greater foresight than I. You are doubtless right. Let us say no more about it." Their relationship continued unaltered, but Lauzun detected a certain constraint in her that disturbed him.

At this juncture Sir Charles provided a welcome anxiety. He returned to Barton in such delicate health that it became

imperative to consult his physicians in London. Sarah insisted on accompanying him, and they all three made the return journey together. The physicians ordered Sir Charles to take the waters at Bath. Sarah, feeling no necessity to go with him, remained in London.

Lauzun, on the contrary, was very much concerned for the host he had treated so shabbily. He suggested to Sarah that it would be but a proper courtesy for him to spend two or three days at the cure with her husband. He says that she approved, and seemed to be grateful to him for the thought. Either she had temporarily lost her sense of humor, or her gallant coxcomb was beginning to bore her.

Before setting off for Bath on a Monday, Lauzun made Sarah promise to receive him the moment he returned—"on Friday, just before noon." He arrived at the assignation with the promptness of a man "deeply in love." Lady Sarah was not at home. It was incredible. She had promised that she would close her door and spend the whole day with him. Lauzun's peace of mind was not increased on further inquiry. The footman reported that Lady Sarah had set off with Lord Carlisle to visit the Duke of Richmond at Goodwood.

All the rage and anguish that jealousy inspires took possession of Lauzun. He sat down and wrote Sarah a letter dictated by anger and excitement: if she did not return at once to London, he would regard her as the most wicked, false, and perfidious of women.

Sarah's reply was "mild and indeed tender," with certain reproaches for the way in which he had poisoned all the charms of love by his violence. In two days' time, she promised, she would be in London. Two days—when she knew what he was suffering!

On the second day, Lauzun went to her house to greet her. He waited there all afternoon and evening—and still no Sarah! But she had promised to come to him that day; surely, she would arrive before midnight! The rumbling of every

bringing her. His hopes revived and perished with each echo of hoofbeats. Twelve o'clock ended the longest day that Lauzun had ever lived through. He returned to his lodging and spent the early morning hours pacing the floor, "a prey to the most harassing reflections."

At six o'clock came a knock at his door, and a messenger to say that Lady Sarah Bunbury had just returned. Would Monsieur come to her at once? The agonized lover flew to her side and found her—at breakfast! Love had not robbed Sarah of her appetite, and, characteristically, she had chosen fortification before emotion. The servants came and went with the dishes, and more than an hour passed before they were alone. When the servants had at long last cleared all away, and the dining room slumbered in the morning sun, Sarah turned to him and delivered herself of a lengthy harangue, with what interruptions from the impatient lover one may well imagine. She told him that she had found him charming, that no man was ever dearer to any woman, and that even the extravagance of his jealousy, springing as it did from an excess of passion, had not displeased her. But as she warmed to her subject her natural sincerity triumphed over her vanity, and she told Lauzun exactly why she was disappointed in him.

"You have not had sufficient confidence either in your own constancy or mine. You have not found that I was necessary to your happiness, nor have you cared to bind yourself to me by ties which nothing could ever break. By rending my heart, you have dimmed your own image in it. You have continued to be jealous and violent, after forfeiting the right to be so."

As Lauzun attempted to defend himself, Sarah motioned to him to be silent, and continued: "I am conscious now of all the dangers. Nothing can ever make me forget them. If my brother had asked me to show him your letter, how could I have refused him? And if the Duke of Richmond had read it, I was undone—and sacrificed for whom? You have yourself destroyed the sentiment that attached me to you. I no longer

love you—but that sentiment has been too tender for its impression, henceforth painful, not to persist for a long while still. From now until a time that is perhaps remote, we cannot expect to meet with indifference. I venture, therefore, to ask you as a favor to leave England, and to count now only upon the tender friendship which I have vowed to you for life.”

Struck by so severe, so unexpected a blow, Lauzun—who was nothing if not a man of sensibility—swooned away. Appalled by the terrible effect of her words, Sarah flung herself on the floor and tried to restore him to consciousness. As she bent over him, bathing his face with her tears, her sister-in-law came into the room.

Astonished by the spectacle that met her eyes, Mrs. Soame drew back. “Come in,” Sarah implored, “and look after this poor wretch. He is my lover, and—I leave him to you.”

With these words, she hurried away. A few minutes later she stepped into her post chaise, and set off to join Sir Charles at Bath.

Clearly, the affair was over, but this was precisely what Lauzun was incapable of understanding. He set out for Bath, and turned back. He swooned and coughed blood, wrote letters and swooned again, and finally obtained another interview with Sarah. But she had so altered toward him that he realized it would be folly to prolong his stay. He returned to France still puzzling over the unusual rebuff. “I knew of no rival lover,” he exclaims piteously, “but I had been loved by her and she loved me no more. I was in a state of savagery which nothing could diminish.” When he heard that she was ill, nothing could restrain him. He rushed off to London without leave and without a passport. Sarah received him with gratitude and pleasure, but after twenty-four hours she told him to be on his way. “Remember that Lady Sarah is nothing more now than your friend. Do not for her sake run all the risks that would be incurred by a longer absence.” He re-

ceived her letters more and more infrequently after her return—and finally they ceased altogether.

The reader of Lauzun's Memoirs is at no loss to understand Sarah's conduct. A few pages of that unrestrained arrogance, one glance at that smug, dapper profile, make it clear why Sarah wearied of his attentions. Lauzun was happiest when several women looked to him simultaneously for sentimental consolation. But Sarah did not accommodate herself to this charming arrangement. While she reigned over his heart she reigned alone, and she had the bad grace to grow tired of him before he had grown indifferent to her. Such conduct shook the very foundations of Lauzun's sensibility. "My whole character was altered. I had lost my gaiety, all the attractions that had made me popular. I was no longer sensible of the pleasures that formerly had had the greatest charm for me."

This tribute to Sarah is touching. One is moved for a moment to something like pity. But alas, only for a moment, for when one turns the page, one finds a change of tone: "I did nevertheless seize every occasion that offered to distract myself from so profound a grief, but almost always without success. I made the acquaintance at the Opera Ball of an extremely pretty girl . . ." \*

\* In this chapter the biographer of Lady Sarah Lennox has followed *Memoirs of the Duc de Lauzun*, translated, with an Appendix, by C. K. Moncrieff; Introduction by Richard Aldington; Notes by G. Rutherford; published by George Routledge and Sons, London. If the reader be inclined to ask how much of the Memoirs are fact and how much fiction, a man of genius has answered that question. Thomas De Quincey in his review of Lauzun's Memoirs advises the reader not to be misled by contempt for a man who disregards the decencies of gallantry. "That book, I am aware, is generally treated as a forgery," De Quincey wrote, "but internal evidence, drawn from the tone and quality of the revelations there made, will not allow me to take it as such. There is an *abandon* and carelessness in parts which mark its sincerity. Its authenticity I cannot doubt." Lauzun's Memoirs were not published by himself; the publication was posthumous; and by whom authorized, or for what purpose, is not exactly known. "Probably the manuscript fell into mercenary hands," De Quincey continues, "and was published merely on a speculation of pecuniary gain. From some passages, however, I cannot but infer that the writer did not mean to bring it before the public, but wrote it rather as a series of private memoranda, to aid his own recollections of circumstances and dates."



## XII

### *“In This Rudderless State”*

IN SPITE of her outward poise, Sarah's disillusionment had shaken her profoundly. In yielding to her first lover she had responded in all sincerity to declarations only momentarily sincere. In the belief that Lauzun was pledging eternal devotion, she had even proposed an elopement to Jamaica, and such a proposal had seemed in the first rapture of surrender a glorious and logical solution. Now it appeared merely ridiculous. She had misplaced her faith and her love, and when she discovered her mistake she dismissed her lover in a sudden and overwhelming revulsion. Lauzun's suffering had been genuine enough to soothe her wounded pride and attract her sympathy. But what a strutting little peacock he was! For a time she continued to write him out of kindness—and to thank her stars that he was no longer underfoot.

In the first misery of her disappointment with Lauzun, Sarah had turned once more to her faithful admirer, Lord Carlisle. Although she was not overwhelmingly attracted to him, she undoubtedly enjoyed his devoted companionship. Their relationship is reflected but dimly in the correspondence of their intimates, and one does not know exactly how close they became in the next few months. But it is certain that Carlisle was completely under her spell and that she encouraged his passionate admiration in ways not altogether commendable.

When Carlisle had returned to England with the Bunburys, in the hope of diverting Sarah's affection from Lauzun, he had broken his promise to join Charles James Fox in Italy. Fox expressed his disappointment, and Carlisle assured him that he was merely postponing their tour of the continent until spring. But April came and went, and still Lord Carlisle was in London. Lady Sarah was smiling on him again, and he preferred to flutter round the shrine of his goddess.

While Charles James fumed and fretted at the delay, old Lord Holland, who was also in Italy, amused himself by composing an ode, in imitation of Horace, as a tribute to the nicest and prettiest girl of his entire acquaintance. He posted two copies, one to Lady Sarah and one to the ubiquitous George Selwyn. "Pray show it to Mr. Walpole," he wrote Selwyn, "and with Lord Carlisle's leave, to anybody. Indeed I do not expect compliments, but I am not ashamed of it; for consider it is wrote by a sick old woman near her grand climacteric; for such is your faithful and forgotten friend."

I

Sally, Sally, don't deny,  
But, for God's sake, tell me why  
You have flirted so, to spoil  
That once lively youth, Carlisle?  
He used to mount while it was dark,  
Now he lies in bed till noon;  
And you not meeting in the park,  
Thinks he got up too soon.

II

Manly exercise and sport,  
Hunting and the tennis court,  
And riding school no more divert;  
Newmarket does, for there you flirt!  
But why does he no longer dream  
Of yellow Tyber and its shore;  
Of his friend Charles's favorite scheme  
On waking think no more?

## III

Why does he dislike an inn?  
Hate post chaises, and begin  
To think t'will be enough to know  
His way from Almack's to Soho?  
Achilles thus kept out of sight  
For a long time; but this dear boy—  
If Sally, you and I guess right—  
Will never get to Troy.

Sarah liked the ode; she wrote Lord Holland her entire approbation of it. Certainly the last line sized up Lord Carlisle very neatly. He was a dear boy, but he would "never get to Troy." Still, he played second fiddle delightfully, and Sarah was not disposed just at present to shut her ears to those strains.

She was forced, however, to hear them at a distance and to employ a neutral listening post. For although the waters at Bath had benefited him slightly, Sir Charles was still suffering from "the complaint in his stomach," and his physicians now obliged him to go to Spa in France for a second cure. Since he had been lucky with all his entries at Newmarket, he was in a humor to follow the prescription. Sarah, who was "wore to death with routing," and anxious no doubt to recover in peace from the strain of the Lauzun affair, longed to stay at home, but she consoled herself with the hope that a successful cure might compensate for her exile. After a few precious days at Barton with the ever-satisfactory Soames, she and Sir Charles set off for Spa, and from this time her correspondence with Carlisle was conducted largely through the offices of George Selwyn. Her letters give a clear picture of her life there.

Spa in those days consisted of six or seven sizable houses and a neat village of four-room cottages, with plain, white-washed walls, in which most of the visitors were lodged. The watering place teemed with fashionables, and everybody

peeped in at the cottage windows to watch them at breakfast. Visitors lacking a back room or a large house were quite "at the receipt of custom all day."

When it rained, Spa was detestable, but when the weather was fine and the cure successful, nothing could have been more delightful than the good-humored and unpretentious idleness of the place. "You need never ask a soul to eat," Sarah told Susan later, "but dine at two or three o'clock in peace. You may walk out *in the street* or in the promenade close by all the morning, buy your own greens and fruit, read the papers at the bookseller's, go a shopping, or make parties for the evening. After dinner you go *on foot* to the rooms, play ball, or walk, make your own party, and walk home (or in a chair if sick) at nine, ten, eleven, twelve o'clock." Everyone kept early hours because the cure began at six or seven in the morning. Horses, which were *pénible* in the extreme unless one had brought along an English saddle, carried one to the fountain, which was two miles or more from the village, and while the patient beasts crawled up the hill, one had plenty of time to reflect, to gather up the loose ends of one's life.

Such an opportunity was precisely what Sarah needed, but she did not put it to good use. Certainly, her reflections could not have opened up any very constructive prospects. The past was a series of disappointments, the future stretched ahead in an endless vista of marital frustration and empty diversion. As for the present, Charles was recovering and was turning to his usual courses—gaming from morning to night, giving breakfasts and dances, posing once more as the *beau garçon*.

"I am in love with Madame de Tomatis," he wrote in a postscript to one of Sarah's letters to Selwyn, "and I have not time or attention to write letters. I cannot help, however, sending you two lines of the satire that has been made here

as a specimen of the poetical abilities of the author. Speaking of Lady Sarah's finery, he says:

"As for the Shrewsburys and all such frumpery  
To them she prefers her black-legged Bunbury.

"The author very probably had lost money to me and paid me thus . . . Madame de Tomatis is divinely handsome and wonderfully virtuous. She refused the King of Poland and 6000 ducats for life. . . . You would be of particular service to me by playing with her husband who games very deep at *trente et quarante*." Such foolery was harmless enough, but the tone does something to explain Sarah's dissatisfaction with Sir Charles.

Her countrymen at Spa gave her just as little satisfaction. "Lord Fortrose, a mad brother of Mr. Shaw Stuart's, and a pack of Irishmen are hallooing and swearing about the town all day. To do them justice, they are very good-humored but not very agreeable." And the agreeable rather than the worthy was at this moment the object of Sarah's attentions. She cut all the tiresome English, and chose her own circle from among the attractive foreigners. There were the Princess Poniatowska and Mademoiselle Kelbel ("pretty and lively"); there were the two Counts Ravinski (the elder handsome and grave, the younger a lively young man of eighteen who was recovering from wounds acquired in a duel fought for his mistress); there were two Danes, a Hanoverian, a Frenchman, a Swiss, and a very stupid Dutchman (the last admitted only for variety).

And always at a comfortable distance there was Lord Carlisle. Direct correspondence between them Sarah had forbidden, but she took pleasure in sending him messages through Selwyn. She had heard that he was gaming heavily, had lost in fact £800; she was obliged to him for having his picture made; she did not approve of his being such a pigeon

to Colonel Scott; she was sure he would be pleased to know that a lampoon had been made upon her "as so fine a lady that I will not keep company with anybody." With such scoldings and chatterings and deft flattery, Sarah kept poor Carlisle fluttering about the continent in a state of indecision.

Eventually, reports of her levity—especially one supposes, of her affair with Lauzun and her flirtation with Carlisle—had reached the faithful Susan in New York, and she demanded an explanation. The sincerity of Sarah's reply is characteristic, and it reveals a good deal about the rudderless state in which she now found herself:

"After having long waited for a letter, my dear Netty, I was more than recompensed for the delay by the charming, cheerful, pleasant letter I received a week ago. I will answer it exactly, my dear Netty, and must therefore begin with those same stories you say you have heard of me. You begin with that, and I must begin with thanking you for your kind, sensible, and gentle way of advising me. I am very conscious that the less a woman is talked of the better in general, and in particular upon such subjects. I will not say it is my misfortune to have met with people envious of my happiness, and try to excuse myself by blaming others. No. I will own the truth, I have had the vanity to love general admiration, and the folly to own it—which is without doubt reason sufficient for envious and abusive people, if there are such, to lay hold of and to blame me, with reason I confess, and therefore I forgive it them. I am only the more vexed every time I hear of it, and the more angry with myself, but I have but too often proved that my vanity entirely got the better of my resolutions.

"It would be much too long an argument to talk and justify myself (which I can do) of various things I have been blamed for. But be assured, my dear Netty, that my morals are not spoilt by the French. They are so totally different from my character, and from what I was brought up to think

right, that it would be having a very mean opinion of me indeed, if you thought three months could undo all that nature and custom had taught me.

"That I have in every action of my life kept up to the very good education I have had, is, I fear, too much for me to say, nor do I believe it was scarce possible (tho' I have seen an example of it in Louisa, but she is an angel, and I'm weak, unsteady, a thoughtless vain creature). But still I do assure you it's not possible with a good heart (which I own I pique myself upon) to change so totally, without being a most miserable wretch. It is my first wish to make Sir Charles happy, and in that, if I may believe him, I have succeeded far beyond my hopes. My next is to keep the affection and esteem of my relations and friends. I hope that, also, is the case still—at least, I have not seen it otherwise. The third is to be treated with regard in the world. How far I shall succeed in that, is what I am not a judge of, further than that I do not ever meet with any reason to be mortified among the people I live with. I have not at present any guess of what or how you have heard of me. I know what might be the foundation of many stories, but they must have been improved, I fancy, before they could reach so far. I do not desire to hear any more particulars of them, and will end this subject with begging you not to be uneasy about my faults, which I fear will not mend, but to be content with knowing that I am happy."

There is a note of instability—almost, one would say, of terror—in that letter: "I do not desire to hear any more particulars." Sarah seems here to have lost the idealism of youth and to be chartering her course by the flickering lights of expediency.

Back in London she flung herself into all kinds of family activity. She tended Stephen Fox's wife through the terrors of her first confinement. She became an indefatigable canvasser for Bunbury, who was seeking re-election to Parliament, and came home one evening to announce that she had secured

ninety-four out of a hundred voters. Sir William Musgrave gallantly replied that he was only surprised "how those remaining six could withstand so charming a temptress." And a less kindly wag observed that Sir Charles Bunbury would have been perfectly qualified to represent his constituents "if they had four legs and a tail."

Absorption in the temporary could not hide the fact that in the realm of the fundamental the standards of Sarah were undergoing a violent alteration. Indeed, her character was threatened with complete disintegration. And at this critical moment, in the winter of 1768, her husband, with his flaccid indulgence and indifferent good humor, was of no help to her whatever. He seemed always to be amused rather than offended by her mounting indiscretions.

One evidence of Sarah's coquettish instability was her failure to break off sharply the ridiculous long-distance flirtation with Lord Carlisle. She knew that it was wise for Carlisle to detach himself from her, and she generously encouraged him to seek new interests; after she had succeeded in packing him off to join Charles Fox she began to pull wires to obtain for him the coveted Order of the Thistle, with which he was duly invested in Turin. But she did not in any real sense snap the ties that bound him to her. "My mind," Carlisle told Selwyn, "is not yet enough at ease not to feel the utmost pain when I am leaving every minute further behind me what I esteem above the world." These feelings Sarah did not sincerely discourage, and George Selwyn positively encouraged them.

What Selwyn's purpose was it is difficult to say. Beneath the foppish exterior of that curious creature one catches glimpses, even at this distance, of motives strangely sinister. He liked to gamble for high stakes, and was often seen in the leather bib and broad-brimmed flowered hat which constituted the gaming costume at Almack's. He liked to gossip with the ladies and dance cotillions. He liked also to pull the strings, to manipulate other people's lives for his own amuse-



ment; and his greatest pleasure was to watch the public executions in front of the Old Bailey. Corpses were Selwyn's particular delight. "Should Mr. Selwyn call," said a gentleman on his deathbed, "show him up at once. If I am alive, I shall enjoy seeing him; and if I am dead, he will enjoy seeing me."

Whether such tastes were merely the expression of an idle curiosity or whether they indicate a more fundamental idiosyncrasy, one is not sure. But where Carlisle and Lady Sarah were concerned, there can be no doubt that in playing both ends against the middle Selwyn expended an intelligence worthy of a better cause. He established himself as a constant visitor at the house in Privy Garden; he took Lady Sarah to the theater and the opera, asked her to dinner, danced with her in the blue damask room at Almack's, and wept with her when the bishops forbade a huge masquerade there in Lent. He would take her aside at parties, and leading her into an upper room, communicate such parts of Carlisle's most recent letter as he thought might please her. Then he would dash off a note to Carlisle telling him of his faithful offices: "*Je profite de certains moments pour vous rappeler à son souvenir*, if that was necessary"; "I desired her to write a line *quelconque* to you"; "You may be sure that we do not pass an hour without mention of you," etc. At times he employed a more subtle poison; he carefully retailed to Carlisle all the instances of Lady Sarah's levity, and he was not above hinting that worse than levity might be imputed to her. "When Lady Carlisle"—probably his mother, now Lady Musgrave—"tells you that she has seen her, and when I tell you that I have dined with her, we certainly mean to please you. But we do not keep up a flame that, inasmuch as that is the proper description for it, had better be extinguished. *Crescet indulgens insti*. I am sure I shall never say anything to lessen the just and natural esteem which you have for her, but when there is grafted on that what may make you uneasy, I must be an enemy to that

or to yourself—and you know, I am sure, how incapable I am of that."

Unaware of Iago's malice, Othello continued to receive him into his confidence. "Pray thank Lady S. for her goodness in interesting herself in my health. Lady Holland nursed me at Nice and made me take magnesia. . . . When will Lady — be at Spa? But I will not think about it, for I am afraid that scheme is impracticable." Desdemona, however, was in this case wiser, and when it became apparent that Carlisle, for all his writhing, was really determined to stay away, Sarah's friendship with Selwyn declined.

As the year of 1768 drew to a close she found herself, for the first time, very much alone. She was surrounded, of course, by scores of admirers and acquaintances, but there was no one who was close to her. The incessant wrangling about money matters between the Ilchesters, the Hollands, and the O'Briens had put her again at cross-purposes with her beloved Susan, who had chosen also to read her a lecture on her failings. Caroline was absorbed in her ailing husband and son; Louisa Conolly and Emily Kildare were in Ireland; and Sir Charles, although as "kind and indulgent" as usual, was of less and less comfort to his wife. Aside from running her household and attending to her social duties, Sarah had no responsibilities, and practically nothing to do but make herself attractive to men. The two who had sworn her eternal devotion had disappointed her sadly, but she had no intention of taking such experiences too seriously.

In her loneliness and frustration she now embarked on a series of experiments that were to make her name a by-word and to bring her crashing down from her social station. The names of her lovers are unrecorded, but they were reputed, with some exaggeration no doubt, to be legion. With true Stuart recklessness, Sarah did not trouble to conceal her indiscretions. And though the men who dined at her house in Privy Garden were extremely gallant, word soon got about

that the fascinating Lady Sarah Bunbury was quite a fast woman.

There is definite, though not altogether trustworthy evidence, of one affair which shows how Sarah's conduct was deteriorating. She sank to an actor and a place of assignation. The place was no ordinary inn, but one of those little apartments which the fashionables used for clandestine rendezvous. The back door of the Long Acre bagnio was very commodiously situated for privacy in a bye-court, and many were the little closed carriages that drew up before it. The heavily veiled ladies who stepped out of them were always furnished with a private key that admitted them to the elegant flight of rooms above. The waiters were not allowed to enter. The wine and provisions were deposited in an outer chamber from which the gallants served themselves and their mistresses, and an iron bar served to indicate that the apartment was already occupied.

In this atmosphere of sordid elegance Sarah met the actor Powell, who had six years before helped the playhouse to carry on during Garrick's absence in Italy, and who, as Sarah had told Susan on that occasion, "is a very good recruit for tragedy." Powell was apparently an equally good recruit for Cupid: "According to some inscriptions on the windows it appears that Mr. P——, the actor, and Lady S—— B—— had more than once made offerings at this altar."

But if the aspirants to Sarah's favors multiplied, so did the dangers to her peace of mind. Indeed, one adventure almost led to her complete undoing. Captain S. had read Sarah's indiscreet inscriptions on the window of the Long Acre bagnio, and determined to try his luck. He was a superficial young man, with a common share of understanding and an uncommon degree of vanity. He had moved in military circles, which even then were famous for extravagance and dissipation, and by playing the sedulous ape to better qualified

beaux he had attained the status of a "pretty fellow" who was admitted to dangle with some success at Ranelagh and the Pantheon.

Casting about for an introduction to Lady Sarah, he paid court to an acquaintance, a certain Miss Gordon, "who was more beholden to her negative charms for the continuation of her admission into good company than to the immaculate rectitude of her conduct." That lady flattered herself that his devoirs were serious, and she was not indisposed to speak of her conquest. What was her mortification to discover that the gallant captain had only used her to gain an introduction to Lady Sarah Bunbury. Not content with the role of stepping-stone, Miss Gordon despatched a letter to Sir Charles Bunbury in which she revealed the whole affair. But Sarah was too quick for her. Recognizing her hand, she intercepted the letter, and wisely gave orders that her false friend should never again be admitted to the house. Captain S. was astonished by these proceedings. "I thought," he told Sarah, "her ugliness a sure protection for her virtue."

For this malicious tale one is indebted to a subsequent issue of *Town and Country Magazine*, and one cannot, of course, take the gossip columns of the eighteenth century any more seriously than those of the twentieth. But editors would never have dared to print such stories unless Sarah had already destroyed her reputation, and the echoes of her light conduct are so persistent and so numerous that one cannot disregard them.

Nor is it possible, in the last analysis, to condone her conduct. The eighteenth century was a lusty age, and the great indulged their taste for port, gossip, gaming, and intrigue with impunity, if they observed certain conventions. Society wisely admitted that love and marriage might be separate experiences, and it allowed a woman to enjoy one or two discreetly conducted affairs. It did not allow her to write her name on the windows of a notorious bagnio. And even when

one has admitted that Sarah was unhappily married, if she did, in fact, sneak down a back street to an assignation, one can scarcely admire her for it.

To sacrifice all for love, however, indicates a certain nobility. And for such a sacrifice Lady Sarah Bunbury was ready when she met Lord William Gordon.

## XIII

### *All for Love*

WHERE AND HOW they met is a matter of pure conjecture. Did their paths cross for the first time in the winter of 1767-68? Or had they, as distant cousins and members of the fashionable world, been casual acquaintances for years? At whose dinner table, at what ball or rout, in what concert hall or picture gallery did Lord William Gordon's eyes first kindle with something more than mere admiration? And when did Sarah first realize that the sordid gallantries of the past had been swallowed up in something far greater? Only this is certain: sometime in 1768 both figures in this extraordinary romance were more in love than they had ever been before.

Lord William Gordon was born in York on August fifteenth, 1744. His father, Cosmo, Third Duke of Gordon, had died when he was eight, his eldest brother, Alexander, had succeeded as the Fourth Duke at the age of nine. William's younger brother, Lord George Gordon, who was destined to achieve notoriety in the No Popery Riots of 1780 and to sit for his portrait to the author of *Barnaby Rudge*, was at this time only eight months old.

The widowed Duchess, who was thus left with three small boys on her hands, was not inconsolable. In 1756 she presented her children with a stepfather, General Staats Long Morris of the British regular army and the Colony of New

York. Morris's brother Lewis later signed the Declaration of Independence, but the General remained a staunch loyalist and an army man to the core, and his two younger stepsons followed in his footsteps. Lord William was entered as a Lieutenant in the Eighty-Ninth Regiment when he was only fifteen, and his brother Lord George was listed as an ensign at the advanced age of nine. Such formal grants of rank, while they did not compel the small officers to take the field, nevertheless gave seniority and probably produced sinecure pay. In 1764, having completed his education and his grand tour, William was commissioned and began to serve in earnest in the Thirty-Seventh Foot.

At twenty-four, when he met Lady Sarah, Gordon cut an unusual figure in London society. Together with his boon companion, the young rip who was just succeeding as Duke of Dorset, he had half of London laughing over his escapades, while the other half frowned. His reputation for high-spirited gaiety stirred the curiosity of women, and he had also at bottom a strain of the same morose and romantic sensibility which was to bring the female population of England to the feet of his younger kinsman, Lord Byron. The elegance of his person completed his triumphs. His aquiline nose, his extreme pallor, his reddish-brown hair, worn straight and smooth about his ears without the vestige of a curl, gave him the refined arrogance of one of Titian's Venetian soldiers of rank.

Here perhaps was the forthright masculinity that Sarah had been blindly and desperately seeking among actors and adventurers. Until now her experience with men had been singularly unfortunate. Her first flame, Lord Newbottle, had proved a shallow coxcomb. The King had wooed her with ambiguities and then had jilted her before all the Court. With her own husband she had been neither physically nor spiritually compatible, and he had always preferred the company of grooms and jockeys to that of his bride. Lauzun, her

first lover, had disappointed her almost at the moment she had yielded to him. Carlisle alone had loved her devotedly, but she had never cared deeply for him; she had merely grown dependent on his companionship. And now at twenty-three, after months spent in an aimless and degrading search for love, she had found a man whose courage and candor appeared to permit no sly fear of consequences, and no furtive intrigue. It was in the intimacy of her house in Privy Garden—one is fairly sure—that the basis of their strong attraction was soon revealed as an emotion far more warming, and far more vital, than a mere passing interest or sensual fancy. Freed from the feeling of humiliation she had come to expect as a concomitant of love, Sarah was in no mood to reckon the dangers of her position. She responded heart and soul to Gordon's passion. And to his reckless devotion, which was to bring down upon them the wrath of outraged British morality, she could impose no barriers whatever.

The first phase of their romance, however, is veiled in obscurity, and the whole remarkable story must be pieced together from indirect yet reliable sources. If Sarah confided in Susan or in anyone else, her letters have been suppressed or destroyed. When they came to edit the *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, Lady Ilchester and Lord Stavordale stated that Lady Susan preserved none of the letters between June, 1768, and June, 1775. But Sarah's contemporaries found her sufficiently interesting to spend a good deal of time and ink in recording their opinions, and the correspondence and diaries of a few of them—Lady Mary Coke's for example, and Madame du Deffand's—have, fortunately, been published.

Gordon and Lady Sarah were watched from the first by a host of acquaintances, and among these, as one might expect, was the insatiable George Selwyn. Evidently the lovers were conducting themselves with a deplorable lack of discretion, for on February twenty-sixth Selwyn wrote Carlisle, "Lord



William Gordon had better leave town." Feeling, perhaps that it would be unkind to tell an old admirer that his beloved had fallen madly in love with Lord William Gordon, Selwyn nevertheless could not resist a chance to hint that scandal was brewing.

By the middle of May it was clear that the cup of the scandalmongers would soon be filled to overflowing. Sarah was pregnant, and though she did not reveal her condition to Susan, one can sense her anxiety and her depression, in the tone of her letters: "My phiz," she wrote Susan, "is grown coarser and older as you may think, and my nose grows longer, as you used to swear you saw it grow; it must be so by this time you may be sure. . . . I hardly ever ride now, but walk or drive about in a cabriolet." Even Sir Charles, whom she ordinarily referred to with kindness, received a barb: "Charles, thank God, is infinitely better, and indeed I think quite well, only I dare not say so, for he loves to be thought ill." And then to excuse herself from supplying the usual bulletin on their mutual acquaintance, she added, "I can't tell you any London news for I have not been there these two months, and I never inquire much about it, for I have found by experience that for one truth, I hear ten lies invented by envy and propagated by foolish, chattering people, that it has quite sickened me of asking news."

Plainly, people had been saying unkind things about her, and she foresaw that their tongues would soon clack even more loudly. Ever since her marriage, gossips had been whispering that Sir Charles Bunbury was incapable of procreating children, and Sarah knew that when the news of her pregnancy got abroad the world would not be long in naming the real father.

Now and then during the long summer and autumn before her confinement, while she was separated from Gordon, her courage failed her. Wistfully she looked about her at the dear, familiar landmarks of Barton, and at moments it seemed

to her that nothing could ever supplant the peacefulness and the beauty of the home into which she had poured so much of her frustrated energy. The trees she had planted were growing so fast it did her heart good to see them. The new library was almost finished; it was a charming and comfortable room. Since Sir Charles confined his reading nowadays to news of the turf and the political scene, Sarah must have wondered who would browse among her books, if anything were to happen to her, or if for any reason she should have to leave Barton. "My frequent journeys," she confessed, "have taught me to prize my dear old Barton and home the more. I think many places as pleasant as London, but none like Barton."

By midsummer, gossips on both sides of the Channel were speculating about the reason for Lady Sarah's retirement. Certain human crises may be concealed or glossed over; drunkenness, nervous diseases, insanity, may be hidden from the public eye during their most distressing manifestations. But the loss of a fortune, an impending death, or an approaching birth, is impossible to hide from a curious acquaintance. The advent of a love child is promptly whispered by the gossips and Madame du Deffand was *au courant*. When Horace Walpole wrote her about Lady Sarah in July, she replied: "Truly, truly, I knew of the condition of Milady S. I praise your discretion—apparently you doubt mine." Her knowledge must have been a disappointment to Walpole, who always flattered himself on the freshness of his reports.

Selwyn in London and Carlisle in Venice were also comparing notes on her situation. Carlisle, with his usual generosity, was much concerned for Sarah's future: "I should have been upon thorns till you wrote again, for indeed I should have guessed that she was with child, but have had a hundred fears about her." Apparently Selwyn had reassured him, for Carlisle concluded by begging Selwyn to extend his "confident congratulations to Lady Sarah." His generosity, how-

ever, was by this time sufficiently objective; he could hardly be expected to cherish a romantic attachment for the expectant mother of another man's child. "I give you my word of honor," he told Selwyn, "all the old story is over."

Meanwhile, the principals in the scene preserved a discreet and—to the biographer—highly exasperating silence. The only record of this period in Sarah's life is a formal announcement in the *Annual Register*, which published births in the families of peers and persons of quality: "Lady Sarah Bunbury of a daughter—nineteenth December." Lady Holland, ever the best and most protective of sisters, hovered over the cradle and took charge of the christening. The ceremony was held in the chapel at Holland House, and though Lord Holland was too ill to attend, his position as godfather lent the child the protection of a great name. As for Sir Charles, his indulgence had attained something akin to true greatness of heart—or else he was flattered by having paternity thrust upon him. Sarah's daughter was born in his house in Privy Garden, and he apparently never hesitated to give her his name. Thanks to his lenity, little Louisa Bunbury began life like any other baby born in wedlock.

Thus appearances had been preserved, and everyone—including Lord Carlisle—breathed a deep sigh of relief. That a woman's husband should be the father of her children was too broad a generalization for English aristocratic society from 1750 to 1837. To a twentieth-century in which Reno facilitates legitimacy one must contrast the turn of the eighteenth. Then the Duchess of Devonshire, the Countess of Bessborough, Lady Melbourne, and many other great ladies produced children toward whom their husbands contributed only complacency or face-saving.

But if Sarah's friends thought that she would accept permanently these conventional arrangements, they reckoned without her passionate sincerity. She had always been good-natured about her husband's shortcomings, and she may have

felt that in her extreme need he owed her a similar indulgence. She was naturally anxious to protect her child, even if she had to resign herself temporarily to a false position. But her feeling for Gordon was not so trivial that she was willing to play up to Sir Charles's indulgence and go her way as though the matter was closed. For Sarah had discovered a man who loathed their present situation as much as she did, who loved her all the more as the mother of his child, who was perhaps restrained only with difficulty from preventing the christening at Holland House. And the rapture of her discovery she was not disposed to forget.

As her strength returned, her restlessness increased. Lord William was hardly in a position to call at Privy Garden. Yet she must have longed to have him with her now even more than during their first ecstatic discovery of each other. Lying on her couch, she had to receive instead Caroline, who clucked protectively over her erring younger sister; or George Selwyn, who cracked jokes and stared with morbid curiosity; or Sir Charles, who merely made her feel despicable. For a woman passionately in love, the conventional denouement which these three had engineered, with the best intentions in the world, grew increasingly intolerable.

On January thirty-first Lady Sarah packed up and went off to Barton, taking her six-weeks-old daughter with her. One supposes that as soon as she was out of the reach of prying eyes Lord William was not slow to pay his respects. But matters did not stop there. "On Sunday, February nineteenth, 1769," according to the deposition of Sir Charles's steward, "her ladyship walked out as usual, but not returning home at the usual time, the Family were alarmed." The steward and the servants "went out in search of her, but without effect." Lady Sarah Bunbury had walked out alone to meet Lord William Gordon. And to Barton she would never return.

The lovers hastened to Knole—at Sevenoaks, in Kent—the

country seat of Lord William's friend and boon companion, the Duke of Dorset, who by the most embarrassing of coincidents was staying in London with Sarah's brother, the Duke of Richmond. Apparently this contretemps did not trouble the household at Knole half so much as it did Sarah's relatives in London. For by this time the news was all over the city, and in some strange fashion the London *Chronicle* had been able to lay its hands on what purported to be a letter from Sarah to Sir Charles Bunbury. "A very sensible and pathetic letter has been received from a lady lately absconded, in which she acknowledges great gratitude to the person to whom it was addressed; and that the step she has at present taken was in consequence of so strong an attachment to a certain Gentleman, that had she not pursued this measure it might have affected her life; that therefore, finding it impossible to be happy without the possession of that Gentleman, she thought proper thus publicly to withdraw herself rather than clandestinely to raise to the name and fortune of the former person a number of illegitimate children; and this resolution still further led her to confess her suspicions respecting her last child."

Sarah's sister Louisa, was, according to Lady Mary Coke, nearly distracted. Louisa rushed down to Knole, and within two days of the elopement she had persuaded Sarah to return to Holland House, there to be lectured by Lady Holland, a woman of authority; by Lord Holland, a man of no mean powers of persuasion; and doubtless by her nephews and husband as well. They confronted her with her daughter in the hope that in order to insure the continued protection of Sir Charles she might return to her home. But Sarah would not budge. She wept, but she stood firm in her insistence that she would not impose either herself or Gordon's child upon her husband.

Meanwhile, London continued to titter and whisper, and buzz with speculation. Lady Mary Coke, with her uncon-

scionable appetite for the frailties of her acquaintance, simply could not let the scandal die. She rushed from drawing room to drawing room, inviting confidences about the reckless pair and picking up, magpie fashion, the tidbits that came her way. Since she herself had once been incarcerated by her exasperated spouse,—although for very different reasons—she received with approbation the suggestion of Sarah's old enemy, the Princess Amelia, that the elopement gave Sir Charles Bunbury the right to lock up his wife for the rest of her life. And she recorded with a particularly savage delight the sufferings of Sarah's relatives. Lady Strafford whispered to her in a bird shop that the Duke of Richmond was nearly crazy with grief and that he had determined to fly with the Duchess to France. It was rumored that Lady Louisa Conolly was to take care of her sister's natural child, while poor Mr. Conolly lamented that his sister-in-law "showed no great contrition for the part she had acted and seemed determined to live with Lord William Gordon, but said she did not care in what part of the world it was; owned Sir Charles Bunbury had been a very indulgent husband."

But the most exciting and incredible item in Lady Mary's budget she had gleaned from Sarah's aunt, Lady Ailesbury. The Duke of Richmond, according to that lady, had called on his guilty sister, presumably at Holland House, in the hope of persuading her to return to the world and live decently. "But," sighed Lady Ailesbury, "he could not prevail."

"What were her arguments?" Lady Mary asked.

"She told him she was determined to go to Lord William Gordon."

At this, Lady Mary perhaps cast up her virtuous eyes and laid a sympathetic hand on the old lady's arm.

Then Lady Ailesbury confessed the full horror of the situ-

ation. "Alas," she sighed, "it is not Sarah's intention to marry Lord William when she is divorced from Sir Charles."

Lady Mary could not believe she had heard her correctly, and demanded further details.

"For that he hath not," Lady Ailesbury explained, "a good temper. She says that perhaps she won't live with him for six months."

Such words from the lips of the adulteress should lose nothing, Lady Mary decided, in the retelling. She copied them carefully into her diary, and added sanctimoniously, "so wild a declaration and so devoid of shame or principles I have seldom heard from a lady whose birth and education must have instructed her with sentiments far different from those she seems to have adopted."

The London *Chronicle* now took up the cry once more, with the announcement that "a Lady of Distinction will shortly set out, with some of her relations, to the South of France, for the re-establishment of her character." How wrong such conjecture was, Sarah would herself presently prove. She had no intention of being bogged down in Aubigny with the Duke and Duchess of Richmond. On the very day that the *Chronicle* was issued she fled from Holland House with her baby, and hurried to Redbridge in Southampton. There she engaged a lodging in the house of a Mrs. Bissell. She gave her name as "Mrs. Gore," explaining to Mrs. Bissell that because she had married without the approval of her parents and her friends she and her husband were "desirous of living together privately in the country." And on the following Sunday, Lord William Gordon joined her there as plain "Mr. Gore."

Was this denouement merely the result of circumstance or of an extraordinary courage? Or did Lady Sarah's flight express a more fundamental *malaise*, one which permeated a whole generation of eighteenth-century society, tired as it

was of the stiff conventions under which it had labored so long? Madame du Deffand, an uncompromising member of an earlier generation, thought perhaps it was the latter. She was tempted to view Sarah's conduct not only as an instance of that *ineffable* English idiosyncrasy but also as a sign of the new principles of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. "Let us return," she wrote Walpole, "to the subject of Lady Sarah. The more I reflect upon the story, the more I find it worthy to be the basis of a novel by J. J. Rousseau himself. He would prove that her morals and her conduct are substantially in accord with the Golden Age, that the sentiments of her husband and her relatives are quite natural, that she is a perfect model of sincerity and good faith."

There is perhaps more truth in this ironic fancy than Madame du Deffand, blind old oracle, supposed. Whether or not Sarah had the *ton* of the Golden Age, she was inherently idealistic. When she left the protection of Holland House, to join Lord William at Redbridge, she was breaking away from an impossible marriage and from the muddiness of furtive intrigue. She was perhaps mistaken in supposing that a love which could have nothing to do with the established order would last very long. But she was not merely abandoning herself to sensuality, and though she might incur the virtuous spite of Lady Mary Coke and Madame du Deffand, she was later to prove that in many ways she had been wiser than they.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bissell's cottage seemed a safe retreat to the lovers, for Sarah's relatives were not likely to look for her in so humble a lodging. Mrs. Bissell's rag rugs, patch-work curtains, and crude oak furniture, were so unlike what Lady Sarah Bunbury had been accustomed to! Caroline and Louisa would not be able to picture their fastidious sister drinking from a pewter mug and dining off earthenware dishes; and Sarah felt safe from discovery in this, her new haven of peace and quietness.



She was sorely in need of a respite. For nearly a year she had been torn by conflicting emotions. From the first, her love for Lord William had been fraught with danger. The strain had told on them both, but Sarah had suffered the more. The long discipline she had had to endure to bring her child into the world, the part she had been compelled to play as a proud wife and mother afterward, had made her feel utterly degraded and ashamed. But now, at last, they had escaped from their intolerably false situation. For the first time in months she was at peace with herself. Burning with devotion, she was prepared, as any other young matron, to live quietly with William and their baby. It does not seem to have disturbed her that they had cut themselves off from the every-day world so necessary to a happy marriage. She seems to have reasoned that it did not matter that they were not united by the church, since their hearts bound them as man and wife.

The first few days slipped by like an idyl. Nothing, not even their first rapturous discovery of love, had ever been so sweet as this humble domesticity. Half persuaded themselves that the role of man and wife which they were playing was actually true, they took it for granted that the good folk of Redbridge would be convinced by their performance. They did not realize the intense curiosity that their sudden appearance had aroused among the townspeople. But prying eyes were observing them, and ears were straining to catch a clew to their identity and station. Soon malicious tongues began to wag. Could this woman with the majestic carriage, this man with the striking red-brown hair, who called themselves "Mr. and Mrs. Gore," be the most talked-of lovers in England? Mrs. Bissell reported that Mrs. Gore called her baby Louisa, and it was well known that the love child Sir Charles had fathered so indulgently had been christened Louisa Bunbury. Soon the neighbors concluded that the Gores were none other than Lord William Gordon and

Lady Sarah Bunbury, and someone informed Sir Charles of their suspicions.

Sarah's relatives must have warned her of the consequences of her reckless intention. Probably Sir Charles had threatened to bring suit for divorce if she left Holland House to join Lord William for the second time. But since he had ever been a supine and dilatory individual, the speed with which he now acted to rid himself of her as thoroughly as possible must have come as a profound shock.

To obtain the final decree was in those days a lengthy and distasteful process involving two preliminary suits and then an application in Parliament—with evidence, trial, and a decision—for a private act of divorce. The first, called an action for "criminal conversation," was a suit for damages against the seducer; but since Lord William had nothing from which to collect damages, Sir Charles appears only to have gone through the motions of filing suit. The second suit involved a limited divorce "from bed and board," from the duty to cherish and support, but without giving either party the right to marry again; and this Sir Charles determined to press immediately.

On March seventeenth, when the lovers still believed that no one knew who they were, Sir Charles's confidential family solicitor paid them a visit at Redbridge. John Swale was, of course, an old acquaintance of Sarah's. Always, he had saluted her with the greatest respect, on his way to and from her husband's study. Now he had come to spy on her and to serve her lover with a process in a damage suit. And when on April twenty-second he came down again to serve Lady Sarah with the citation from the Ecclesiastical Court, she decided to mince matters no longer. She told him frankly "that she was going to Scotland with Lord William Gordon, and that she intended going by the name of Mrs. Gore."

Mrs. Bissell was all a-flutter over the reputation of her lodging house. When she learned the truth from John Swale

she hastened to align herself with the cause of respectability. The couple, she whimpered piteously, had always appeared to belong to the elevated sphere; how was she to know that she was being put upon when they claimed to be Mr. and Mrs. Gore? She readily complied with Sir Charles's request for a deposition; repeated with the utmost relish the intimate details necessary to the case; and concluded that "Lord William Gordon and Lady Sarah Bunbury had such a carnal knowledge of each other, and thereby committed adultery together."

All this, however, was not sufficient for Sir Charles. He was not content until he had harvested a similar deposition from Margaret Frost, the sister of Sarah's loyal maid, Susan Frost—and a cat of a very different hue; and one from his valet, John Rush, to prove that he had neither seen nor cohabited with his wife since the previous January. Armed with all these gleanings from the servants' hall, Sir Charles gave in his libel to the Ecclesiastical Court on April twenty-second, 1769. "Lady Sarah Bunbury," he said, "being of a loose and abandoned disposition, and being wholly unmindful of her conjugal vow, &c., did contract and carry on a lewd and adulterous conversation with Lord William Gordon." Two months later the Ecclesiastical Court granted the partial divorce and separation. Sir Charles now had his option: He could refuse Lady Sarah her freedom, or he could obtain the private Act of Parliament which would enable him—and Sarah—to marry again.

Meanwhile, Sarah and William, harassed and exasperated beyond measure by the sneaking and prying of Sir Charles's agents, had fled to Scotland. Mr. James Hume, a friend of Lord William, had lent them Carolside, near Erlestown in Berwickshire. There in the square white house on the wooded banks of the Leader, the lovers, with little Louisa, passed the spring of 1769. Their stay has been commemorated, after the fashion of a generation more heavily romantic

than theirs, by the naming of a Lovers' Walk, and a plantation of two intertwining hawthorn trees.

But such idyls are never so idyllic as one would like to suppose, and the clatter of the post-boy's horse soon put an end to the few weeks of happiness. The lovers were dismayed to find that their relatives had not only discovered their hiding place but were unanimous in their determination to make them see reason. The families besought the headstrong pair to consider the undeserved shame and ignominy that their conduct was bringing upon their relatives—and, of course, on themselves. Louisa and Emily, one imagines, scolded and worried in one breath. Did their dearest Sal realize that she was condemning her little Louisa to a life of social ostracism? Had she heard that Caroline had taken to her bed and that Lord Holland was suffering a grave turn for the worse? Even Sir Charles, it was rumored, had shut himself up at Barton to escape the pity and scorn of society.

As for the Gordons, undoubtedly they attacked Lord William from the financial angle, reminding him that he was a person of lavish upbringing and extravagant tastes; that his portion as a younger son was a scant £500 a year; and that his only hope of advancement lay in resuming his military career. This, they probably pointed out, it was not yet too late to do. If their dear boy would leave Lady Sarah Bunbury at once, they felt confident, his country would immediately require his services. Such peccadillos were soon forgotten in a young man of military promise, but no one would ever forgive him if he threw away his future for a frivolous coquette.

To her own relatives Sarah probably paid little attention. She was satisfied with her present existence. She had always asserted, "I could be happy in any life and bear inconveniences with a man I love." Now that she had in a sense gained far more than her heart's desire—for she had both a devoted lover and a child, and for good measure a pleasant country

house with dogs and horses and a garden and books for the fireside—she clung obstinately to the hope that all might yet work out for the best. And she must have viewed with a jaundiced eye her family's description of Sir Charles Bunbury's broken heart, especially if she had received the sentence of the Ecclesiastical Court.

But the contention of the Gordons—that Lord William was ruining himself for her sake—was more difficult to refute. When he had resigned his commission in the Army on January twenty-first, just thirty days before their first elopement, they had both been in a mood to sacrifice all for love. Now, after living with him for weeks on end, she probably was beginning to realize how much his Army career had meant to him; and she knew that he had pursued military studies from childhood in the confident hope of rapid advancement. Now that he had renounced his career, time was beginning to hang heavily on his hands. He adored her as passionately as ever, but there were moments when he sat frowning into space. He lacked the companionship of men; and perhaps he regretted his professional duties. Sarah must have felt that his restlessness was but natural. She had always had abundant common sense, and it told her that no full-blooded man could be satisfied with unadulterated domesticity.

Perhaps her uneasiness was further aroused by a copy of *Town and Country* in which she and Lord William were pilloried as "Messalina and Gordianus," for it is not likely that the Gordons overlooked the opportunity it offered to substantiate their arguments. The scurrilous author of these portraits took it upon himself to sum up the whole history of Sarah's amours—her unfortunate experience with George the Third, her unhappy marriage (the result of "a state of desperation"), her husband's indifference, her surrender to Lauzun, her furtive intrigues—and he concluded with a serious libel: "It is pretended that B—— consulted some of

his most intimate friends, whether he should challenge Gordianus for the injury he had done him; when it was assured, he was dissuaded from it by a wag, who told him, if he went 'alphabetically to work, it would not be Gordianus' turn these ten years, though his name was but in the seventh letter of the alphabet.' The conceit had its effect, and no blood has been spilt upon the occasion."

It is impossible to pretend, that this libel was without foundation. There was sufficient truth in it to make Sarah blush and to give credence to the allegations which the Gordons undoubtedly made against her character.

Nor were the Gordons and the Hollands alone in their condemnations of the lovers' behavior. Lady Anne Conolly, Louisa's sister-in-law, regaled Lady Mary Coke with the information that Sarah had spent money "like a drunken sailor," and that she and Gordon were now living in an ale house in Scotland. This report was promptly contradicted under the heading "Amorous Intelligence" in the *Town and Country Magazine* by "T.L.," an old acquaintance of Sarah, who, having received her hospitality, turned public informant as soon as he had quit her house. T.L. had been traveling in Scotland, as he told the eager readers of the magazine, and "knocking at the door of a cottage to obtain some information, there issued from it one of the genteelest figures I had ever seen, who with much good nature gave me the best direction in his power; but, at the same time observed, that it was too late to reach a place of any tolerable accommodation, offering me, with great politeness whatever conveniences his little dwelling would afford. Struck with his appearance and manners, I accepted, without hesitation, his offer, and was introduced to a little, neat parlor, where I found, to my infinite surprise, the charming and accomplished L. S. B.—! After the repeated accounts I had heard of the miserable situation of this fond couple," T.L. concluded, "I was greatly astonished to find that a mutual satis-

faction seemed to reign in their countenances, that they dwelt with pleasure on their reciprocal passion, which was still visibly glowing with its primitive ardour. Nay, the very step that had in some measure banished them from the world, and driven them to their present retreat, afforded them a solace for any little temporary wants—and, they gloried in having risked ALL FOR LOVE.”

All this spying and talking combined with the forceful representations of the Lennoxes and the Gordons to poison the existence of the lovers. They knew that it might be years before Sir Charles obtained the final decree that would permit them to marry. They asked themselves how long their love could thrive if the machinations of relatives and scandal-mongers condemned them to aimless wandering and friendless exile. And what if their passion could not survive the test? They would then be bound in a wave of recrimination and regret. After three brief months, the strain was already beginning to tell. Sarah was tormented by contrition and melancholy. William, whose temper was always uncertain and who could never have been content with this passive existence, grew increasingly moody and excitable. A day came when they could no longer pretend that they were happy.

William rode away alone, and Sarah returned to Goodwood with their child. Her brother, the Duke of Richmond, had taken her under his protection.

## XIV

### *The Declassee*

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND had, indeed, taken Sarah under his protection, but he was too worldly to risk presenting her to her former acquaintances and friends. Lady Sarah Bunbury was considered to have strayed too far from the path of rectitude, and her world would not take her back. The situation was awkward, since everyone of quality traveling past Goodwood stopped to pay his respects to the Duke and Duchess. To avoid embarrassment for all concerned, he installed Sarah in a small farmhouse in Goodwood Park, where she lived in complete retirement, entirely occupied with her child.

Poor Sarah had chosen an unfortunate time to repent, for her youngest sister, Cecilia, was wasting away from galloping consumption. In October, Lord and Lady Holland took the unfortunate girl to the continent for her health, but she was unable to proceed south from Paris, and died there in November.

The picture of the healthy sinner confronting the innocent corpse, which had been sent to Goodwood for burial, inspired Lady Mary Coke to a fresh outburst of malice: "Lady Holland said it was lucky for the late Duke and Duchess of Richmond that they could not look out of their graves to see that sight," she recorded in her diary on the sixteenth of January, 1770, "tho' the situation of the one was greatly pre-



ferred to that of the other." Lady Holland's unswerving devotion and affection for Sarah belie the words which the writer plainly put in her mouth, but the next sentence in Lady Mary's diary rings true: "She did not give the least hint of there being any idea of Sir Charles being reconciled, from which I concluded there was no foundation for the report."

There was absolutely no foundation for the report, but during the previous autumn there had been a great deal of talk about reconciliation. Sarah's relatives naturally hoped that Sir Charles might take her back, and they did their best to persuade her that if he offered to do so it would be her duty to return to him, for the sake of her daughter. And though there is nothing in the records to show that Sarah wanted to be taken back, or considered it possible, the *Town and Country Magazine* was bold enough to publish, ten years later, "A Letter from Lady S—— B—— to Sir C—— B——" in which some hack writer, whose style proves him to be a forger, undertook to titivate his readers by portraying Sarah as a degraded suppliant:

"Much Injured Girl

"Dare I address these lines to you, after the conduct I have pursued, replete with the blackest ingratitude? The amiable lover, the kind friend, the tender, the too indulgent husband, was requited by a woman, who cannot even plead ignorance for her excuse, and though the choice of her own inclinations, with infidelities forgiven and repeated, till broad shame stared you in the face, and made you most justly abandon her.

"But guilty as I have been, more strongly seduced by vanity and fashion, than a natural propensity to vice, I have not lost the power of reflection; nor are those sentiments you have often applauded so entirely erased from my breast, as not to make me look back with horror on my past conduct.

Our passions gone, and reason in her throne,  
Amaz'd we view the mischiefs we have done,  
After a storm, when the winds are laid,  
The calm sea wonders at the wrecks it made.

"If the most sincere contrition, united to a just notion of your many virtues, most excellent man! If an immutable resolution of never more deviating from the rigid paths of honour! If an utter abhorrence of my seducers, can form any mitigation of my guilt, can palliate the offences I have given you, let me, I entreat you, lay claims to some small share of your friendship, though I should ever be precluded from your love.

"As a prelude to my reformation, be assured that all the regard and partiality I entertained for Lord W.G. are contrasted by horror and detestation. The indignities he has offered my person, and the repeated ill-usage I have received from him, would be sufficient apology for my present sentiments concerning him, did not the least dawn of reason, and a moment's reflection, point out the infamy of the connection. Let me cherish, tenderly cherish, the stings of remorse, that now prey upon me almost to despair, for this life has now no consolatory hope in store for a wretch like me, unless I should obtain your forgiveness—but how vain the thought!

"Pardon, Sir Charles, the presumption of this letter, and if you have any pity to confer, bestow it on your once loved, and most miserable Sarah B——."

No one who is familiar with Sarah's style can believe that she composed this fulsome epistle. Moreover, it is unlikely that Sarah sought her husband's forgiveness at this time, for Sir Charles had previously reaffirmed his positive intention of obtaining final divorce by Act of Parliament. And she had no reason to beg so abjectly for marks of his friendship, for

though Sir Charles had not spared her feelings in gathering his evidence, he was prepared to return her marriage portion of £500 a year. Also, he accepted it, as a matter of course that little Louisa should continue to bear his name.

As for Lord William, he had chosen to reverse the medal, to give full play to that romantic asceticism which lay beneath his high-spirited gaiety, and, like his kinsman Byron, to repent in sackcloth and ashes. "Thursday last," the *Scots Magazine* for September, 1770, solemnly reported, "set out for Dover on his journey to Rome, the Rt. Hon. Lord W—— G——, once esteemed by the British Court one of the most accomplished young noblemen of the age. He is gone with a full determination never to return. He has cut his hair close to his head, carries a knapsack on his back, and intends walking to Rome on foot, with no other companion than a very large dog. He was ever remarked for his generosity, and has divided his horses, dogs, etc., among his acquaintances, several to his particular friend, the young Earl of T——le. He has never appeared in public since the much-talked-of connection between him and a certain lady, by whose friends he was never pardoned, and from their behaviour, he has adopted the extraordinary resolution."

How Sarah reacted to this dramatic—and probably over-colored—story is not known. Even the most sensible of women have in their hearts a strain of Bovarysme, and are apt to respond to a romanticism which is willing to go to such extraordinary lengths as Lord William's. Yet Sarah was not, one should remember, a romantic by temper. How quickly she had tired of Lauzun's antics! And even while her pride was touched by the story of Gordon's exit, she may have reflected that such a love, without roots in the every-day world, was hardly worth the sacrifices it entailed. It was well enough perhaps to set out for Rome with no other companion than a very large dog, but what about one's deserted mistress languishing as an undesired relation in a

Sussex farmhouse? Was it really so difficult to strike dramatic postures in sackcloth? In paying tribute to his dead passion, might not Lord William have been a shade less spectacular and a little more thoughtful of her and her child? Perhaps the worldliness of Caroline and Louisa was not so contemptible after all.

At any rate, the penance which Sarah was now performing was more difficult than Gordon's. Of the nature of her humiliation an entry in the diary of John Baker, a Sussex neighbor, affords a glimpse. "Hence Goodwood," he wrote. "Just spoke to the Duchess who come in just going horseback—Duke out at tennis ground. . . . While waiting for Dss coming in, L.S.B. opens door coming in, but seeing a stranger there, turned back." And so would any self-respecting woman who labored under the consciousness that even in the diaries of obscure observers her name was forever printed in asterisks.

Even when she ventured into the precincts of Holland House, her relations there still looked upon her as a social liability, and her presence was apt to precipitate the most unpolitic contretemps. "I went to Holland House and saw Lady Holland with a child upon that balcony," Lady Mary Coke wrote in her diary on July sixteenth, 1772. "Upon my coming near she rose up in a hurry and went out of sight and I heard her ring the bell, upon which, instead of asking if she was at home, I rode away; but thinking it very strange, I returned and, seeing a servant, I intended going in, but the servant told me Lady Holland begged to be excused. I then asked what child it was I had seen on the balcony. He said he did not know, but he supposed it was with somebody come to see the house. All this appeared so extraordinary that at first I did not know what to make of it, but since I came home, I'm persuaded Lady Sarah Bunbury was at Holland House and that it was her child . . ." Lady Mary's malicious curiosity was still unsatisfied, and three days later, when she encountered Lady Holland in church, she pressed

her for an explanation. Poor Caroline reluctantly admitted that she had desired to be excused because Lady Sarah had been with her. "This," Lady Mary concluded, smacking her lips, "was exactly as I had guessed."

But when she called at Holland House again, in October, she found Sarah playing cribbage with Lady Holland and Charles James Fox. Caroline had now ceased to treat her sister like the family skeleton, for she promptly invited Lady Mary to make one of the party. Although greatly embarrassed, Lady Mary played two rubbers. "I endeavoured," she afterward confided to her diary, "neither to avoid speaking when it was necessary nor to address my discourse particularly to anyone for fear it should seem I meant to shun the other, for tho' I should not like any degree of intimacy, when chance brings me to any person's company I should be sorry to do anything to shock them."

Lady Mary's behavior can hardly have added to the pleasure of the occasion, but it was not in her nature to be either cordial or kindly. She was continually haunted by the fear that Sin might yet succeed; she viewed with alarm every rumor of reconciliation with Sir Charles and every sign that Sarah was emerging from her penance. But she could not quite bring herself to give the cut direct to one, who though she might be under a cloud, was yet a Duke's sister.

Other visits there were which stirred the troubled waters more profoundly. Armand de Lauzun had been moved by the news that Sarah had ruined herself for Lord William, and when, in 1773, he found himself in England, he could not resist his desire to see her again. He heard that she was living in a farmhouse near Goodwood, and that she was seeing no one. He rode down to Sussex on horseback in the dead of winter, and gained admittance to the house by posing as a groom with a message from Lady Holland. Climbing the stairs in the dark, he opened a door and came upon Lady Sarah. She was standing with her back to him, making sup-

per for little Louisa, who was badly frightened by his entrance. "Lady Sarah recognized me," he says, "took the child in her arms and came to me, saying, 'Embrace my daughter, my dear Lauzun; do not hate her. Pardon her mother, and remember that if she should lose me she would have no other chance of having a protector except yourself.'"

"Lady Sarah in her retirement," he continues, "was wearing a simple blue dress. Her hair was bobbed. She had no powder. She was more beautiful and more seductive than ever before. After the six years' interval we could not meet without great emotion. On my side I promised to take charge of her daughter whenever she required it. I made no reproaches. She thanked me, and after two hours of conversation, we parted."

Lauzun's willingness to admit his own generosity appears not quite so glorious as he flattered himself it was. But—what a glimpse of Lady Sarah! Her loneliness and concern for her child come out of obscurity as if suddenly highlighted.

Loneliness and concern for her child were not the only unpleasant consequences of her recklessness. She had now to face a scandal far more shocking than the reality of her elopement. That it was later proved the product of a diseased mind cannot have made its onslaught less terrible. The *Morning Post* for February fifteenth, 1774, contained a flat assertion that Lady Sarah Bunbury was with child by her nephew, Charles James Fox. The story was not new; it had been current since the preceding August; and although no one in his senses believed it, this muckraker's lie would not down. George the Third chose the moment when White's and Almack's must have been buzzing with this story, to tip out Charles Fox. The famous letter of dismissal from Lord North is dated February twenty-fourth:

"Sir: His Majesty has thought proper to order a new Com-

mission of Treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name. North."

Did this mean: "You had better go out quietly, and give your attention to suppressing the scandal which is so prevalent?" The episode had certainly a deplorable effect on Sarah. For it was not until nearly two years later that the perpetrator, Cosmo Gordon, was discovered and "sent to Coventry" by his regiment mess—and by that time the damage was done. Gordon, whose name became a by-word, had also written scurrilous paragraphs about the Duke of Dorset and Lady Derby, the Duchess of Devonshire, and the Duchess of Gordon. It was small consolation to Sarah, however, to discover that she had been slandered in such company. Charles James Fox had a standing which would enable him to survive any scandal. The ladies, too, would survive the *canaille* with comparative ease, but Sarah was doubly vulnerable, and each stab of slander made it more difficult for her to regain her lost position.

The story must have distressed the last days of the Hollands, and it was unfortunate that the two who had always been kindest to Sarah were not destined to witness her successful future. Lord Holland died in June, 1774, and his wife survived him only twenty-three days. Lady Mary Coke, in an unaccustomed burst of charity, acknowledged that Lady Sarah "behaved with great affection." Horace Walpole reported with surprise that Lord Holland had left Lady Sarah a legacy of £200—but when one considers that he died rich enough to leave a comfortable estate to Charles James and Henry, this legacy for his "dearest Sal" does not seem over-lavish.

One consolation Sarah had during her ostracism. Sometime in 1770 Lady Susan and Mr. O'Brien returned from their long exile in America. How Susan greeted her friend is, of course, an enigma, since their correspondence between

1769 and 1775 is missing. The odds were all against their finding much comfort in each other. Susan's pride had been irritated by Sarah's lectures on extravagance, and the worldly caution which she had inherited from Lord Ilchester was perhaps alarmed at the prospect of renewed intimacy with a friend who had outraged polite society. But Susan, too, had suffered the condemnation of friends and family at the time of her marriage, and she loved Sarah dearly. Her heart went out to Sarah in her distress, and the letters, which are extant after 1775, show that their friendship survived in full force the test of Sarah's long humiliation.

After seven years—the most colorful in Sarah's life—without a word from her pen, it is refreshing to have once more her thoughts and feelings at first hand. Rediscovered in the midst of ill fortune, she emerges as spontaneous and charmingly generous as before. Instead of harping on the treatment she was suffering at the hands of society, she was intent on persuading Susan to a happier frame of mind. Susan's family had not welcomed her so warmly as she had expected. Their snobbish temper was still ruffled by her marriage, and the fact that it had obviously turned out happily for her irritated them all the more. Their stand-offish neglect angered Susan, and Sarah, the real outcast, undertook to smooth out the difficulty.

Meanwhile, Sarah, unable to move among the scandal-mongers of London, and desperately lonely at Goodwood, had removed to Castletown, the country seat of her sister, Louisa, near Dublin. After living so long in Goodwood Park on sufferance by a brother with whom she had no close sympathy, she felt at Castletown as though she had come home again. Louisa had disapproved strongly of Sarah's recklessness, but now the past was forgiven and there began again an affection between the two sisters which was destined to increase throughout their lives. "I live almost all the



day long with my sister," Sarah wrote. "Mr. Conolly seems to like my being here, and shows me so much kindness that I hope it is not disagreeable to him, and I'm sure it makes Louisa happy, for she scarce passes a day without telling me that having me with her is one of the greatest pleasures she has. There is something so pleasant in being so sincerely loved and welcomed, that it is not wonderful I should be perfectly content and happy here."

Even in Castletown, however, she was not allowed to forget that she had lost caste. "We have a good deal of company. . . . They come in a very pleasant way, dropping in at dinner time and going away soon after, so that they never interfere with any employment we have. . . . Some of my old acquaintance with the ladies have been more than civil to me, quite kind indeed, and some of Louisa's acquaintance have been very civil, but great part of both sorts have taken no notice of me. *Je m'en console* for this reason, I don't want company because I've society which is better, and so I always take the civilities I meet with from ladies as a *favour*, I am not obliged to people I don't care about, and yet when they do it from a good natured motive I am always doved with it and like them vastly. The only person whose countenance I *regret* is Lady Dowager Kildare's, and it does vex me she won't take notice of me, but I can easily comprehend her prejudice against it, tho' she is a remarkable good and sensible woman, and vastly above all the low prejudices of old age. But this, I suppose, strikes her 'countenancing a fault' and—she can't bring herself to it, and indeed, I don't wonder at her, tho' I intend to try all I can to persuade her to it, and I don't despair of it in time."

Since she still suffered such slights and snubs from the virtuous, Sarah was careful to reassure Susan about her conduct. "I can't give you a *positive* account of my *good behaviour*," she added, "for I'm a partial judge, you know.

I hope the proof of it will be that I shall not be abused, and as I have heard nothing against myself yet, I hope I am very grave and dignified."

However circumspect her conduct and however devoted the Conollys, she had to endure one more ordeal of notoriety. On Tuesday, March nineteenth, 1776, the *London Packet* announced: "A Petition of Thomas Charles Bunbury was presented yesterday to the Upper Assembly, praying leave to bring in a Bill to Dissolve his Marriage with Lady Sarah Lennox, his now wife, and to enable him to marry again." Three days later the bill was presented by Lord Cathcart and read for the first time.

Sarah returned forlornly to Goodwood. "I do not know," she wrote Susan from there, "what you have heard about me, but I suppose of a divorce taking place now, which was begun long ago. This piece of news is *true*, and I am not sorry for it, since Sir Charles has so positively affirmed that he *never did intend nor ever will* let me live with him again, which I flattered myself he would much longer than I ought to have done, if I had considered that his indifference towards me must grow stronger every day."

These remarks are altogether extraordinary. Sir Charles had been indifferent to her almost since their wedding day. His apathy was nothing new; indeed, it had been the underlying cause of her unfaithfulness. Nor is there any other indication that Sarah had ever seriously considered returning to him. But perhaps she had fallen into a panic, when she first returned to Goodwood, at the prospect of years of loneliness and no immediate hope of a richer life. If she had actually sought a reconciliation with Sir Charles for the sake of her security and that of her child, one may be sure that Susan had encouraged her in the notion. Probably Sarah wrote as she did in order to show Susan that she was not seeking her own freedom.

At any rate the matter was settled now; the whole of her

disgrace would have to be recapitulated in the public prints, and it was necessary to face the consequences: "I cannot but feel extremely sensible to the unpleasant renewal of this affair, and altho' I take care the newspapers shall not offend *me* by *never* looking at them, yet I suppose others do. (I am very eager to go anywhere out of the way, and my brother has been so good as to hurry his intended journey abroad, and to take me with him, that I may be gone before this begins.) . . . My spirits are not quite so low as they are worried and perplexed. I long to be gone, as being quite alone is not pleasant, and yet I hate to see anybody, even the servants, whom I know study the newspapers, and, I suppose, make their remarks upon me as I sit at dinner."

The hour of deliverance, however, was not far away. Sordid evidence of Sir Charles's deponents, who had made the first days of Sarah's elopement so miserable, was heard once more, and the divorce went through as uncontested. By May twenty-fourth, having passed both in the Lords and the Commons, it was ready for the King's assent. And here a ticklish problem arose. It was customary for the King to be present in crown and robes at a session of both houses when the Clerk of the House read the well known formula of royal assent, "*Le Roy le Veult*," to acts of Parliament. But for George the Third the necessity of putting his stamp on an act which proclaimed the adulterous conduct of a woman whom he had hoped to make his Queen was embarrassing enough in itself. And to hear the act read in public amid the titters of his courtiers would be still worse. What was the poor man to do? The august legislators thumbed hurriedly through the *Journals* of the Lords for a precedent, and as usual the search was successful. Henry the Eighth had been confronted with an equally embarrassing duty in pushing through a bill of attainder against the adulterous Catherine Howard. On that occasion, the Lords, anxious not to "renew in the heart of a Prince, a grief now lulled to sleep" had gravely decreed that

he might give full legal assent *in absentia*. So, because of the sensibilities of the House of Tudor, the scion of the House of Hanover was able to spare himself the painful ordeal of sitting by while the scarlet letter was pinned on the breast of his youthful passion. If Sarah learned of his absence, it probably did something to soothe her wounded feelings.

One other item in the proceedings seems unusual to a twentieth century American unversed in English law. Mr. Eliot, said the *London Packet*, "urged, in opening his case, that there was a child by this marriage upon whom £10,000 was settled; that Sir Charles had settled £500 a year upon Lady Sarah: and produced Mr. Henry Bunbury, brother to Sir Charles, who had an interest in the remainder of the estate, to show that Mr. Bunbury had no objection to the settlement." The Commons, previous to 1796, demanded that a man maintain his divorced wife as the price of liberty, so the settlement of £500 on Sarah was not the result of high-mindedness. The deposition which provided for the child's security and proclaimed her the lawful offspring of the marriage was also required by law. We think of a child born in wedlock as a child born of a marriage. Whereas, according to the laws of England at that time, the phrase applied to a child born *during* a marriage.

Lady Sarah did not go abroad with the Duke of Richmond to escape from the repercussions of the divorce proceedings. At the last moment, illness—or profound dejection—prevented her from accompanying her brother. But in many respects Sarah was more fortunate than she could at the moment realize. She might quiver under the snubs and slights of her peers. She might suppose that this twice-told tale of her mistakes would make her name a by-word. She might ask herself whether loneliness and tears and worry, and, worst of all, the ineluctable death of Lord William Gordon's passion, were not sufficient payment, without this ghastly recapitula-

tion of remembered folly. But her spirit had been tempered by trouble, and if she accepted her punishment philosophically, the *déclassée* could look forward to recovery and fulfillment which would be doubly strong and rich for the ordeal through which she had passed.

## XV

### *Recovery*

PAINFUL AS it had been to have her private affairs aired in the courts for the second time, Sarah's spirits rallied when the final divorce decree freed her at last from the frustrating situation in which she had been fixed for the past seven years. She resumed her maiden name, and as Lady Sarah Lennox became mistress once more of her own life. By September she had entirely recovered her equanimity, and with her usual cheerful good sense she resolved to enjoy such pleasures as her modest income and retirement afforded. Truly, she had much to be thankful for: at thirty-two she still possessed more health and vitality than the average woman, and the suffering which had deepened her understanding and sympathy had intensified rather than dimmed her beauty. She felt she could be quite content, if she only had a house of her own to occupy her time. But since all her stipend was needed for necessities, she lacked the money to purchase a home. Suddenly her brother, the Duke of Richmond, who was not often inclined to generosity, offered to fit up for her a house just by Goodwood.

The cup of Sarah's new contentment flowed over, and she immediately cut down her expenses in order to furnish her future abode out of her own savings. "The money spent in making one's home pleasant seems to me the most sensibly

and usefully laid out of any other," she wrote Susan, "for it attaches one to home, amuses one, and does good to those about one, and particularly gives one a cheerfulness and content which no other kind of amusement does so well. I suppose it is partly owing to its keeping one in health, and to its doing no mortal any harm, but right as this sort of expense seems, still, *le necessaire* must first be attended to."

She flattered herself that her new house would be done in a year, but in those days, when houses were built for posterity, construction was as slow as it was sound. When the year was up, only a part of Halnaker—she named it after the farmhouse she had been living in since 1770—was built and covered in. Since the other portions could not be erected until the following summer, 1778, she could not expect to move in, even if all went well, until the spring of 1779. Then, at long last, she could "enjoy the comforts of a home, and a pretty home, and one given to me by the best of brothers, built by his own plan, and owes all its beauties to his plantations, so that 'tis entirely created by him, which adds most excessively to its merit with me."

Sarah was overgenerous in giving her brother all the credit for the design. The Duke built Halnaker for his sister "from her own plans." Probably sister and brother worked them out with the help of the Duke's master carpenter; and as they took shape before her eyes Sarah was delighted. "My house consists of a large staircase of twenty by sixteen," she wrote Susan in August, 1778, "a housekeeper's room on one side, a pantry on the other with a passage to the offices, which are out of the house; and then to the front, I have a drawing-room of twenty-eight by eighteen, and a dining room eighteen square. Above stairs are two bedchambers of eighteen square and a little dressing room, and two smaller bedchambers at the back for servants. You see, nothing can be more compact. Besides this there is a little greenhouse by

way of pavillion to answer the offices, and a little colonnade of four columns to each side to join them to the house, so that it's both pretty and convenient."

Halnaker was situated in the Duke's park, "just a mile from Goodwood in a valley open to the south, with a little prospect and all the hills round it planted, which make fine, sheltered, dry walks and rides, and from there is a noble prospect. In short," Sarah concluded in a burst of rapturous content, "it is *exactly what I like*, and you know that a paradise can't please more than *just what one likes*."

Although Sarah was destined to occupy Halnaker for a briefer period than it took to build it, nevertheless the house served a useful purpose—it gave her an occupation at a time when she sorely needed one, and the promise of an indefinitely prolonged interest. She looked forward to furnishing it by slow degrees, "for the sake of my pocket, as well as my amusement." The Duke had put in the chimney pieces, ceilings, and other expensive fittings. With these installed, she felt that she could "live very comfortably for a year or two with bare plastered walls," and then, "do the bedchambers neat and comfortable first, and so on till all is done." Echoing the precepts which she had so often laid down for Susan, Sarah warned herself, "I am only afraid I shall ruin myself furnishing it, for nothing ugly should be put in so pretty a house, and to split the difference I mean to have everything plain, which is never *ugly* nor *dear*."

While Halnaker was being finished, Sarah led a vagabond life. Sometimes she visited at Stoke with her seventy-three-year old aunt, Lady Albemarle; sometimes she took her daughter to "a little pudling bathing place" of the Duke's; sometimes she stayed at Castletown with the Conollys. Society in general still looked at her askance, but her old friends and acquaintances were beginning to accept her on her present merits instead of punishing her for her past offenses. The kindly gossip she passed on to Susan began to ring once



more with all her former self-confidence; but she now described the doings of the fine ladies with a certain detachment. She would not "affect the old woman" so much as to say that they had not done thus and so in her time, for they certainly had behaved much the same in every respect save one—"racketting their health so entirely away as I find they do now." This assumption that her own life was over, is the only indication of "emptiness" in her letters. When at Goodwood she was very busy—breeding spaniels to present to Mr. O'Brien, fussing happily over her new house, schooling and grooming her little daughter into a presentable young lady, and, in short, doing the thousand and one little duties that absorb a gentlewoman living in the country.

Life in quiet Sussex was enlivened by the coming, and going of the military. Sarah's two brothers were in the Militia, and at one time a regiment was camped around her house in Goodwood Park. She wrote Susan that she was mighty busy "having the command of a flying camp of three tents with about forty soldiers, who are all at work moving a great lump of ground that stood in the way of my edifice, and which the dear old stupid labourers would have pretended to have removed in about four years, I suppose. But this detachment of Militia is quite a godsend to me, for it enlivens the work most excessively."

Without a doubt the commanding officers, resplendent in regimentals, enlivened Sarah's leisure, too. For when the Militia marched away on an itinerary that would take them past the O'Briens' door, Sarah advised Susan: "Go down to your pales to look at them, and I recommend to your notice the Captain of the Grenadiers and one of his lieutenants, who are both very handsome men, for the credit of poor Sussex."

In those days, beauty in a man was frankly rated, and the women discussed the men's good looks in the same vein that men use to describe a striking woman today. Colonel George

Napier, for example, whom Sarah had met in April, 1776, while staying at Stoke with her old aunt, Lady Albemarle, enjoyed the reputation of being "the most perfect-made man possible." When Sarah beheld his six feet two inches, she had taken pains to discover if he were as clever as he was handsome. To her delight, he had read a great deal in many languages, and was well acquainted with ancient and modern history. This was not surprising, for he had been educated under the supervision of David Hume. A good mathematician, engineer, and chemist, Colonel Napier was considered an excellent regimental officer.

It is significant, perhaps, that Sarah's pleasure in her aunt's society suffered no decline after her meeting with the handsome colonel. But there can have been no question of a romantic attachment between them, for the Colonel had a wife and children. Indeed, Sarah entertained no foolish thoughts or speculations concerning his gentle and respectful admiration, although she may have sighed in secret.

Her active mind was occupied with public affairs, and especially with England's troublesome foreign policy, but one cannot say truthfully that any of her findings would have been of much help to Lord North. Since November, 1776, Sarah had aligned herself definitely with the Colonists, and she shared Susan's "feels about the war being in the very spot of ground you lived in. I understand your horror perfectly well, and feel all goose skin with the very idea of it, it makes me creep all over. Only think of the horrible attempt of burning the town, think of the poor sick in it! My God, what a horrible thing it is altogether!" As time passed, Sarah had grown incensed against the British Generals—Burgoyne and Howe—for "employing the Indians, and allowing them to fight their own way!" Susan had reminded her of the time when the two of them had fancied "great things"; but Sarah now thanked God very sincerely that she was not the Queen.

"In the first place, I should have quarell'd with His Majesty long before this, and my head would have been cut off probably. But even if I had loved and liked him, and not had interest enough to prevent this war, I should certainly go mad, to think a person I loved was the cause of such a shameful war." Sarah felt that Susan was particularly well qualified to give her an opinion on the King's behavior toward his American Colonies, because of her friend's long sojourn in New York. "Only two things, I think, won't bear dispute," Sarah wrote her a few days later, "1st, that those who cause most lives to be lost are the worst people, 2ndly, that the Bostonians, being chiefly Presbiterians, and from the north of Ireland, are daily proved to be very bad people, being quarrelsome, discontented, hypocritical, enthusiastical, lying people. Tho' they have money, lands, and employment sufficient for them, they are discontented and rebellious, and whoever has such bad principles for the foundation of their character are not likely to make a good set of people in general."

The diatribe is typically feminine in its rapid flight from issues to personalities. It has a certain humor, too, for those who are familiar with Bostonians today. Lady Sarah Lennox to the contrary, they have made a good set of people. And some might even be moved to ask whether they have always been "enthusiastical" enough—in either the present-day meaning or in religious revivalism. Yet even Sarah hated the thought that the King might subdue them: "He sits there at his ease in Windsor, and fancies he has nothing to do but to order conquer such a place as America; he will grow so insolent about it that it will provoke me beyond all patience." She could *almost* wish him the complete mortification of having Ireland "whisk'd away from him, whilst his troops are sailing, and so have him obliged to give up America, and look like a fool without Ireland." The King was using Ireland so ill that he did not deserve to keep it, and Louisa Conolly

was trembling for fear of an invasion, "upon which she concludes they will cut down all the wood here, and so ruin the beauty of Castletown."

There was ground for alarm. The English fleet ran away from the French, in the later Italian style, in March, 1778, and sailors covered the figureheads of their ships that the effigies might not see that shame. Ireland was undefended except by Irish volunteers who were ready to fight England, and who did win semi-independence for Ireland. Yet, as a good Whig, Sarah shared her aunt, Lady Albemarle's, indignation over the Tory accusations made against her son, the Whig Admiral Keppel, who was afterwards tried for his "disgraceful retreat" from the French fleet, and she lingered to rejoice over his acquittal. Sarah's concern for her cousin, and her sympathy for his mother during the ordeal, may have been heightened by the pleasure of conversing occasionally with Colonel Napier, who was still in the 25th Regiment, presumably stationed in the neighborhood of Coke.

In August there was talk of the French invading England itself, and Susan implored her friend to join her in the west. "When I go there," Sarah replied, "it shall be to see you, not for fear; for I'm not the least inclined to be drove away by the French. On the contrary, I would wish to stay and plead for my poor neighbors, who can't talk French." But she was frankly worried lest her brother, Lord George Lennox, who had left Brighthelmstone in a little boat to join the defense, might be taken prisoner by some prowling French privateer.

Towards the end of the year, word perhaps reached her that Colonel Napier was leaving the 25th Regiment to go into the 80th, where he would command a company after raising it himself. Early in 1779, she heard, no doubt, that his regiment had been ordered to America.

America was uppermost in everyone's thoughts that spring. Although Sarah may have struggled against the temptation to let her imagination follow her newest friend into service

there, she was constantly being reminded of it. From the upper chambers of Goodwood she could plainly see the masts of the two fleets at Spithead, one with transports to carry the troops to America, the other with "Old Mother Hardy," as the young seamen dubbed the Admiral, Sir Charles Hardy.

But, in spite of war's alarms, Sarah's life continued at a jog trot until she went to London in March. While she was there an event took place which she had long hoped might happen. Sir Charles Bunbury heard of her arrival, and wrote and asked to see her. Delighted at the offer, Sarah immediately accepted it. In describing their meeting to Susan, she expressed the hope that her friend would not misunderstand her motives in wishing to see her ex-husband.

"I hope my dear Ly Susan," she wrote, "knows me enough to comprehend that I never could return all the goodness of Sir Charles to me by the least grain of dislike; I was *indifferent*, and that has always been the cause of my ingratitude, which never proceeded from anger or dislike; with this same indifference as to love, I have always had an interest in everything that concerned him, and I never felt satisfied not to have received his pardon."

In this mood Sarah received Sir Charles—and was promptly "too much overcome to have the least conversation with him." But Sir Charles, languid and effete though he might have been, was a man of tact and generosity, and on occasions such as this he could bear himself with a delicacy that went far to counterweigh his faults. He avoided the least reference to Sarah's misconduct; he even contrived, in an ingenious manner, to give her comfort by talking about Lady Derby's passion for the Duke of Dorset, just as Sarah would have wished him to discuss her own for Lord William Gordon. His extraordinary tact restored her spirits in some degree; and he then, very wisely, took his leave.

But he came to see her again the next day, and on this occasion they had a very long conversation. To Sarah's great

satisfaction, Sir Charles appeared to be in remarkably good health and excellent spirits. Without naming Sarah's faults or mentioning the dangerous word "forgiveness," he contrived to convince her that he looked upon her as his friend, "and one whose friendship he was pleased with." He laughed at her for being ashamed to see him before the servants. "I see no sort of reason, Sarah," he said, "why I should not see you just when I please, nor why it should put you out of countenance."

"I can't argue that point with you," Sarah answered, "but I am glad that you can see me with such good humor."

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked. "You know I am not apt to bear malice."

According to her letter to Susan, from which this conversation has been taken, this sent poor Sarah off again into such a fit of crying that Sir Charles protested she was driving him from her. "If my earnest wish to see you happy and comfortable only makes you reproach yourself, I'll keep away." Then he told her that he liked little Louisa vastly, and invited her to visit him whenever she was in town.

This kindness to her daughter gave Sarah so much pleasure that she dried her eyes, and they parted the best friends in the world. "I cannot describe to you how light my heart has felt since this meeting," Sarah confessed, in conclusion, "and that will fully convince you that all love is out of the question, for I don't know what effect it may have upon others, but love has ever given me a heavy heart."

Sarah never saw Sir Charles Bunbury again, and she never wanted to, because every mark of his forgiveness was "like a dagger" to her. On the other hand, the interest he had begun to show in the little girl who bore his name gave her the greatest comfort. Louisa's unfortunate pedigree had always been a torment to her mother. While the child was still in the nursery it was easy to protect her from the stings of the world, but what could the future hold for a young girl in her

unfortunate situation? Realizing that she was in no position to present her love child to society, Sarah encouraged her own friends and relatives to take an interest in Louisa's education. When the little girl was eleven the Duke and Duchess of Richmond took her to London to learn to dance. "The very kind manner they did it in," Sarah wrote Susan, "makes the offer so pleasant that it comforts me in her absence, which I confess I very ill support, but as it's for her good I cannot repine." Again, a year later, Sarah reported, "My Louisa was at Ly Holdernessee's for some time and with the Duchess [of Richmond] and with Ly Lothian, so that she has been *vue & approuvée dans toutes les cours . . .*" That her daughter was sponsored by these ladies relieved Sarah's anxiety, but it was more important that Louisa should be accepted by the man whose name she bore, or the world would remember that she was illegitimate and make her suffer for her mother's sin. So when Sir Charles at last asked Louisa to his house, Sarah tutored her to accept her strange "father" with affection.

If the rumors of Sir Charles's sterility had any foundation, it is likely that he welcomed this spurious fatherhood. And having undertaken these paternal duties for reasons of his own, he ended by surrendering, as did all his relatives, to little Louisa's gentle charm. For by the time she was twelve years old, the Bunburys were taking her about with them as though she were twenty.

Sarah did not approve of this for young girls in general, but because of Louisa's peculiar situation she felt that she must bend to circumstances. The arrangement, she reflected, had this advantage: By the time Louisa had reached twenty, people would never take it into their heads to be uncivil to her, since they would then be accustomed to receiving her. "With this view, therefore, I rejoice at the manner in which she is received, and cannot say half how much I admire Sir Charles and his family for not letting my faults influence their

reception of an innocent person." Sarah's former sister-in-law, the mouse-like Mrs. Soame had also been more than kind. "Mrs. Soame," she told Susan, "has asked to have her stay in London with her a fortnight longer after the Dss [of Richmond] leaves London. Nothing, you see, can be more pleasing to me than all this, and when I am to attribute it to her own dear little engaging ways it doubles my pleasure, and being pleased, I sat down to write you word of it, knowing you would enter most warmly into any news so interesting to me."

Struggling against the fond and foolish illusions that mothers are prone to, Sarah continued: "My daughter is grown a most charming girl, *tho' I say it*. She is but twelve years old and is very childish in everything, so that altho' she fully employs my attention she is not yet old enough to be quite a companion. She looks much older than she is, being very tall. She is not pretty, for she has a very large mouth and thick lips; when she laughs, which is pretty often, she really laughs, for a smile is out of the question with her, and so she shows a set of large, white, strong teeth fit for a man's mouth, not for a fine lady's. She has an ugly nose, partly long and not well shaped at the tip . . . Her eyes are neither large nor small, but sensible; her hair and forehead are very so so; her complexion brown, but healthy enough. Her figure straight and good. Her motions are now awkward; they may grow genteel, they never can be graceful. After all this account, there is a something in her countenance that has the art of winning people's hearts so soon that every creature says of her, 'She is not pretty, rather ugly, but I like her so much that at times I think her quite pretty.' This engaging something arises entirely from her having a goodness of heart, a wish to please, and a degree of unaffectedness that exceeds anything I ever saw."

Evidently Sarah was pleased, as she had every right to be, that her daughter had inherited her own spontaneous charm,



and was puzzled because she and William had not bred a beauty. Absorbed in her first experience of motherhood—the role in which she was to prove herself extraordinarily talented—Sarah found the responsibility very exacting, for she had never asked or expected any help from Gordon since their rupture in 1769. Having been disappointed in his treatment of her, she had preferred to have no dealings with him whatever. Nor could she forget that it was Charles's generosity, rather than William's romantic exhibition which had established Louisa's inheritance and given her affection as well as legal parentage. Lord William, despite the strong disapproval which he had incurred, continued to receive an allowance of £500 from his brother, yet he appears to have contributed nothing toward the support of his daughter. He was perfectly satisfied to renounce both his rights and duties as a parent. And—what must have wounded Sarah deeply—he never expressed any interest in Louisa or showed any affection for her. He seems to have forgotten her very existence.

For the Lord William of the old days—the boon companion of Dorset and the cynosure of the women, the man who had not known the meaning of caution, who had eloped to Scotland, and then had shaved his head and set out for Rome—had vanished into thin air. And in his place Sarah saw a climber and a vulgar adventurer, whose painful antics provided amusement for all English society, except perhaps herself. He had persuaded his brother, the Duke of Gordon, to take him into his regiment. He had taken advantage of the Duchess's good offices to secure a fat sinecure as Deputy Ranger of the Green Park. He had pushed his way into Parliament, and now, in 1780, egged on by his sister-in-law, Duchess Jane, he had launched a campaign to marry an heiress.

The lady whom he was courting, the Honorable Frances Ingram Shepherd, was still a ward in chancery, and Lord

William had even more trouble in winning her hand than had the two noble lords of Sir William Schwenk Gilbert's *Iolanthe*. The heiress herself was willing, but the Chancellor proved highly unsusceptible to argument. Lord Thurlow approved of neither the suitor nor the suitor's proposal that his bride should hand over to him the sum of £10,350. The Chancellor ordered Lord William's petition to marry dismissed altogether, and the House of Lords backed him up. At length, by prudent playing at faro and with the strong support of Miss Ingram's mother and sister, Gordon managed to overcome his Lordship's objections. He won his heiress on March sixth, 1781.

Yet even while she shrugged at Gordon's tactics as a fortune hunter, Lady Sarah could not remain entirely indifferent to what concerned the man in whose arms she had found her first real happiness. For during the notorious No-Popery Riots of 1780, which set London by the ears and precipitated a four-day reign of violence in the capital, Sarah felt herself torn between hatred of the insurrectionists and sympathy for their unfortunate leader, who was Gordon's brother George. "So great is the power of one's feelings over one's reason, that although when alone I could condemn the rash conduct of that poor deluded Lord George and deplore the consequences of it, when others abused him it was with the utmost difficulty I could command my temper and not defend an indefensible cause." And during Lord George's trial for treason—his acquittal affected William so deeply that he collapsed in the court room—Sarah found herself sharing the agitation of her former lover. "I never saw him [Lord George] and I believe he has not behaved well to his brother," she said, "but no matter for that, he is *his* brother, and therefore has a claim to my anxiety for his fate, which, as it must severely affect his brother, gives me very great concern."

Concern she might feel, but love she could not. And pres-

ently a new love was to sweep away the last vestiges of her feeling for Lord William Gordon.

Rodney's gallant victory over the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent on January sixteenth, 1780; Burke's great bill for economic reform, which he introduced to the House of Commons on February sixth with a magnificent speech; and other stirring events are reflected in Sarah's letters of the period. Although Sussex was "famously dull, a corner of the world and no thoroughfare," she managed to keep abreast of the news and to comment on it intelligently. She filled her days with reading and writing, in teaching herself all that she wanted to teach her daughter. She walked and planted, and declared that she never found time enough to do all that she liked, nor a quarter of what she ought to do.

Yet at times she was restless, and wished that she could afford to keep a carriage and so get about more. Life was passing her by; her youth was slipping away from her: "Thirty-five past is not young, *il s'en faut beaucoup*, but one need not be quite old at that age as I am, both in looks and health, unless one has bad health, which I have not." Since there was no preventive of old age, Sarah was determined that it should not be attended in her case "with its usual companions of crossness and discontent."

Sympathizing with Sarah's loneliness, Susan promptly suggested the only remedy that her one-track mind could imagine—remarriage with Sir Charles Bunbury. "Your answer to me about Sir Charles made me laugh," Sarah replied. "Indeed I would give you leave to laugh if I was to marry him again, but that will never be I assure you. First, because Sir Charles, who never liked the life of a married man enjoys his liberty too much to resign it without some temptation, and secondly, because I hope I shall never be idiot enough to marry *avec toutes mes années et tous mes défauts*. But, if I

ever do, you may certainly consider me as mad, and that I've met with a man as mad as myself. Now as Sir Charles *n'est rien moins que fous*, we shall, I hope be friends and no more as long as we live."

Sarah wrote from Stoke, where she was staying with her aunt, Lady Albemarle, in the early summer of 1780. Reading between the lines, it is apparent that she was up to her youthful trick of protesting too much. Then, or very soon afterward, Colonel Napier returned to England, and he had much to say to Lady Sarah Lennox. In America he had served on the staff of Sir Henry Clinton, who, upon General William Howe's resignation in May, 1778, had succeeded to the supreme command of the British forces there. At the second and successful siege of Charleston, South Carolina, in 1779, Napier had become known as "the most active and the handsomest officer of the British Army in America." Doubtless he allowed Sarah to discover his reputation from his brother officers, but he may have confessed his eagerness to continue Major André's services in uniform when word reached them that the spy had been taken, and his disappointment when Clinton had refused to sanction his proposal. And he certainly told her gruesome details of the yellow-fever epidemic in New York. For while he had been distinguishing himself at Charleston, his wife—Elizabeth Pollock, a poor Captain's daughter whom he had met and married in Minorca—and one of his children had died of the disease. Nor had that been all. Returning to the stricken city with his regiment, Napier himself had contracted the malady, and had been so ill that he had been carried on board a transport insensible. Moreover, his illness had all but destroyed his means of earning a livelihood; for Clinton, despairing of Napier's life, had taken it upon himself to sell the sick man's commission for the benefit of his remaining child, a five-year-old daughter. Clinton's act is understandable, as a commission could not be sold after a man was dead. But

upon his recovery Napier found himself bereft of family and fortune, and it is significant that he was later a staunch admirer of Lord Cornwallis, who, it will be remembered, had also suffered ill-fortune at the hands of Sir Henry Clinton.

In resuming his friendship with Lady Sarah Lennox, Napier may have sought her advice about the care of his motherless little girl—another Louisa. It was natural enough for a helpless widower to seek sympathy and understanding from a woman in more or less the same situation as himself. Whatever his excuse for seeking Sarah's company, it was not long before he cast all pretense aside and asked her to marry him.

Now that she had at last found a very attractive man who actually wanted to make her his wife, Sarah must have laughed up her sleeve when she remembered Susan's suggestion that she remarry Sir Charles Bunbury. That was like offering a person who was just sitting down to a delectable feast, a dish of stale hash! Yet there were certain difficulties to be considered in connection with her marriage. Although a son of the late Lord Napier and uncle to the present Lord, as a younger son Napier had inherited nothing. Sarah foresaw that her brother, the Duke of Richmond, would object to her re-marriage, and she felt obliged to consider all the pros and cons before taking the step. But she had no intention of mentioning her suitor to Susan until she had made up her mind.

## XVI

### *Fulfillment*

ETHER LADY SUSAN heard rumors of Colonel George Napier's courtship of Lady Sarah Lennox, or the Duke of Richmond apprised her of his fears and begged her to use her influence to prevent the match. Probably the latter was the case, for, in replying to her gratuitous advice, Sarah remarked slyly, "I never read so sensible a letter as yours, and it struck me the more because it is almost word for word the language my brother has been holding to me, and I can not say more in your praise than to tell you you reason like him."

Sarah was determined to be polite and patient with her old friend, in spite of the sudden interference in her private affairs, but she could not entirely suppress her annoyance. Although perfectly sensible to all Susan's objections to the match, she reminded her that the choice was not her friend's but her own—"for therein consists the only difference between your situation and mine, which I have for some time intended to mention to you, but delay'd it till I was more certain of its taking place." Then Sarah told her quite flatly that she was going to be married to Mr. Napier, "and as you are totally unacquainted with everything relative to me, I must give you my history as shortly as I can."

Her history, as she called it, was already entwined with that of the former Colonel, for she proceeded to tell Susan the facts concerning his pedigree, profession, circumstances,

and recent bereavement. "You would hardly believe, my dear Lady Susan, that a man who has reason to know the distresses of poverty and the inconveniences of marriage, should choose to put himself in the same situation again, and you will think still worse of his sense for the choice he has made of me. For most undoubtedly all things considered there is in all marriage one thousand to one they will turn out ill, and in mine, ten thousand to one against us."

Apparently, no one argument that had been presented to Mr. Napier against his marrying Lady Sarah Lennox had had the least effect on his determined purpose. He replied that he had known her long enough to judge of her character, and that he had a peculiar turn of mind which prevented him from being mortified by her history. He insisted that he was not marrying her out of vanity so that he might brag of her merits, but because he was convinced that her character and disposition suited his.

"If you love me, Sarah," he declared, "I have not the least doubt of our being happy."

According to her letter—from which his declarations are taken—Sarah assured him that she did. And once he had settled this question, he laughed at every objection that was presented.

"Loving you as I do, Sarah, I am quite sure I'll never repent marrying you. It is not a new thought—I've thoroughly considered what you call the 'evident objection' to it. Indeed, from the first moment I knew you, I wondered why nobody had thought of proposing to you."

When Sarah protested that the reason was obvious, he insisted that he had always been of exactly the same mind in respect to her position in the world as he was now; he thought it of little consequence. In short, no one could have been more firm, or, if one chose to call it so, more obstinate than he, in thinking that she would make him happy *en dépit de tout*.

Having satisfied her scruples against entangling an innocent man in her undesirable position, Sarah discussed her own situation, which she knew interested Susan far more than the effect of her marriage on the career of Mr. Napier. Although she enjoyed every advantage it was possible to have in living under the protection of her brother, the Duke of Richmond, the affection she had for Mr. Napier, the gratitude she felt for his excess of partiality to her, the pleasure of being so sincerely loved, "and the hopes of that pleasantest of all societies, which a married person only can enjoy," tempted her to give up her present security for future happiness.

As she knew that Susan thought she had been entirely happy in her beloved Halnaker, she now confessed what pride had made her conceal—that she had but very few friends. Since every one of them lived at a distance, and she had no carriage, it was necessary for them to come to her or give up seeing her. "The latter has proved the case; for three years past I have scarce seen my relations and none of my friends, and I have lived a more solitary life than ever. My spirits are not equal to that. However, if nothing affected them I could have gone on for ever so, but when once my preserving the advantages of living with my brother were only to be purchased at the expense of making a man I love very unhappy, and depriving myself of his company, I confess I could no more have a doubt that it would be happier for me to marry."

Obviously, then, Sarah should have accepted Mr. Napier the moment he asked her, and assumed that her relations would be polite to her future husband. The chief reason she hesitated was because of her responsibility to little Louisa Bunbury. How would her marriage affect her daughter's future? If the Duke of Richmond disapproved of her venture, would it cost her daughter, as well as herself, his powerful friendship? The Duke's protection of Louisa was considered



very important in view of the child's unfortunate pedigree. A former Colonel, no matter how well he had acquitted himself could not take his place, and Sarah tortured herself with doubts and questions. At last she decided to have it out with the Duke.

According to her account of their interview, the Duke, when she told him of her decision to marry Mr. Napier, counter-questioned her in round, brotherly style. "Why change when you are well off?" he demanded. "You risk all, and may lose all."

Sarah bravely stood her ground, but he gave her little satisfaction except to admit that although he objected to the marriage, he wished her to decide entirely for herself. She replied that she had already done so; and he then added that he did not take her decision unkindly, or as the least mark of ingratitude, nor would he ever alter toward her. "At the same time," he insisted, "I cannot, and will not encourage what I hope will not happen. Therefore, you must get those friends to protect you in it that see it with other eyes than mine. I will do nothing—either for it, or against it."

This was small comfort from her "dearest brother," the head of the House of Lennox, whose word she had accepted as law for eleven years. Fortunately for her peace of mind, her sisters Emily and Louisa and her devoted old aunt, Lady Albemarle, all approved of the step she was taking and promised her their support.

Doubtless her sisters had heard Lord George Lennox speak highly of Napier. For Lord George had been in command of the 25th Foot at Minorca in 1767 when Napier had served in it first as ensign and later as lieutenant. And when the matter had been thoroughly discussed with his intended's relations, Mr. Napier announced his impending marriage to his own. Poor Sarah was on tenterhooks as to how her future in-laws would receive the news, and deeply grateful when they welcomed her kindly, for she realized that it was "un-

doubtedly a very bad match for him in every light." Napier was nephew to General George Johnston of Dublin, and to come under the protection of his wife, Lady Cecilia Johnston, was reckoned quite a point of profit.

Finances were their major problem. Sarah's small income would but cover the necessary expense she brought him, and Napier hesitated to seek a commission, knowing that if he did he would be obliged to return to America shortly. If Sarah followed him she would be compelled to leave their two little girls in England, for after the tragedy his family had suffered in New York it seemed unthinkable to expose the children to similar dangers. So their future seemed very uncertain, although Napier was qualified to undertake the business of an agent to the Army. Such a post was not lucrative, but they both felt confident that they could manage on a modest income. Everything, they told each other, would somehow come out right once they were man and wife.

They could not be married, however, until the Duke of Richmond had gone abroad, and Louisa Conolly arrived from Ireland to assist at their wedding; for since her brother still refused his blessing, Louisa's presence seemed indispensable. The delay annoyed Napier, who was "very little acquainted with the world," in Sarah's opinion. But they hoped to be settled by mid July at the very latest in some "vile" house, not in the least like her "dear, beautiful Halmaker," in or near London.

When she heard that there was still time to exert her influence to prevent the match, Susan immediately wrote Sarah a long letter denouncing her impending marriage. Professing the utmost astonishment on receiving Sarah's announcement—such an idea had never occurred to her, she had hardly believed herself awake on reading it, etc.—Susan strove to recall her poor, misguided friend to her senses. "I perceive clearly by it that you are extremely in love, and of course everything will appear to you in a very delusive point of

view; that is all I wish you to beware of. But that is what you will not be, as it is the very nature of passion to deceive; and I think the greatest excuse for a young fool more than an old one, is that the sentiments they feel for the first time they naturally think can never alter, an illusion any second passion must destroy."

Not content with calling her best friend an old fool, Susan proceeded, in the most invidious tone, to recapitulate the well-worn arguments. The approval of Louisa and Emily and Lady Albemarle she dismissed as the result of affection without common sense. Sarah, she declared, was sacrificing the public approval which her retirement had earned for her. By offending the Duke of Richmond she was jeopardizing the position of her daughter. And, worst of all, she was walking open-eyed into the same quagmire of poverty in which Susan herself had so long been floundering. "Poverty," she said, "is an additional and never ceasing little plague that goes on tormenting one incessantly, and neither time or habit, that lessens every other ill, has the least effect on this . . . There is a perpetual little uneasiness occasion'd by the want of money; a little something which arises every day, and every day wants a fresh remedy, like the continued pricking of a pin, though no very violent agony, yet enough to make one's whole life uncomfortable . . . *L'habitude n'y fait rien.*"

This ill-timed epistle Sarah very wisely ignored until after her wedding, which was postponed until the end of August. Whether she hoped that her brother would relent or whether she merely waited for him to remove to Spa where he took the waters, is uncertain. The Duke, at any rate, accepted the inevitable, to the extent of getting his brother-in-law a place as superintendent of the Woolwich Laboratory. And now there was no longer any real obstacle in the lovers' way.

According to the records, Lady Sarah Lennox and the Honorable George Napier were married on August twenty-seventh, 1781, in the Goodwood parish church. Sarah was in

such haste to see her new name that she signed the registry before her husband! Lady Albemarle accompanied her—in *loco parentis*, and ducal *absentia*, perhaps. The dear Conollys were present; they had supported Sarah from the first in her new venture, and it was to their “Irish Hotel” in Whitechapel that the Napiers repaired after the wedding. Louisa Bunbury behaved like a little angel throughout. The child was not so silly or unfeeling as to pretend indifference to an event that would affect her whole situation, nor was she prejudiced against the marriage. Wishing to see everything in the pleasantest light, she was affectionate and sensible toward all, “and prudently forbore to express an opinion.”

Five days after her marriage, Sarah replied in self-confident vein to Susan’s irritating letter of May nineteenth. She assured Susan that her long silence had not sprung from resentment, but rather from the conviction that it was utterly impossible to explain to a person who did not know Mr. Napier her reasons for marriage to him: “Indeed, my dear Lady Susan, there is nobody who allows more than I do for people differing in opinion on most subjects, and I am sure you must allow that marriage is one that allows of the greatest doubts, as no human wisdom ever could ascertain that a marriage would turn out well or ill until experience proved it. Judge then if I can take your advice ill, and be convinced that my not following it don’t make me the less obliged to you for it; and tho’ it may be said that a woman that has been married but a week can be no judge of her future happiness, yet I will venture to be certain that if I am not so, it must be owing to some fault of my disposition or temper, because Mr. Napier knows my character perfectly with all its imperfections, and has not married me without reflection, and being satisfied with me such as I am so far as to shew me such confidence and such dependence on my affection and faith, as a sensible man does when he chooses a wife, I do really think, *tout bien considéré*, it must be my own fault if I am not as

happy as he wishes to make me; and I have no doubt but that I shall continue so."

Had all brides a similar philosophy, there might be fewer divorces. In any case, Sarah's happiness became her, and soon her old acquaintances were commenting on her good looks. The young Prince of Wales visited Lady Cecilia Johnston, Sarah's new aunt-in-law, in October, and when he heard that Lady Sarah Napier was staying in the house he insisted on seeing her. Sarah obeyed the royal command; and the Prince exclaimed that he did not wonder that his father had admired her, but he was persuaded that she had not been more beautiful in her youth. "She was to have been there," he informed the company, pointing to Windsor Castle.

George Selwyn, too, encountered the Napiers that autumn at the Duke of Richmond's; and, of course, he and Sarah discussed Lord Carlisle, now Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Sarah's interest in her former swain prompted Selwyn to write him: "So much for ancient partiality; *il eu subsiste encore, je suppose, un petit brin.*" Mr. Napier was called by Selwyn "*un grand garçon assez bien fait de sa taille, mais une phisionomie [sic] peu interessante, plutot rebarbative.*" He was more interested in Louisa Bunbury, whom he had not seen since he had assisted for old Lord Holland at her christening. To his delight she proved to be—as might have been expected—"a mixture of the Richmonds and Lord William."

Selwyn went about remarking on the resemblance, for Horace Walpole reported to John Nichols: "Others with more malice say they perceive a likeness to *the* Lord William . . . Miss Bunbury has a great deal of the Lennoxes, not so handsome—but with a much prettier person than any of the females of the family."

Gossip of this sort revived the half-forgotten scandal, and made Sarah's return to London something of an ordeal. But Mr. Napier, for all his ignorance of the world, proved skilful

in handling her social relations. He would not allow his wife to shut herself up; he expressed an earnest wish that she should return such civilities as were extended to her. They accordingly appeared at several assemblies, but declined on most occasions when it was possible to do so without rudeness. Sarah's excuse, that a long habit of living in the country made her easily fatigued by the amusements of the town, enhanced her modesty in the eyes of the world, and put her company at a premium. On the whole, Sarah felt that with one or two exceptions, such as the Duchess of Bedford, her old acquaintance had received her with flattering kindness.

Even Sarah's former enemies could not hold out against her indisputable respectability. Lady Sarah and the Honorable George Napier were the very epitome of domestic bliss, and in August, 1782, their first child, Charles James, later the "Conqueror of the Scinde," entered the world. Sarah was pleased, of course, but very much concerned over Louisa Bunbury's possible behavior toward the new baby. To her relief, Louisa, far from betraying jealousy, took a keen interest in everything that went on in the nursery. So much so that Sarah was led to confess, "I am not one of those who know how to nurse and fuss with a little child."

When she had recovered her strength, Sarah sometimes accompanied her husband to Purfleet to the magazine of gunpowder. While Mr. Napier proved thousands and thousands of barrels, she and Louisa walked about enjoying the country air. By nature a very active person in all that he undertook, Napier gained the Duke of Richmond's praise for his attention to his place, and the Duke soon gave him more pay and more to do. Indeed, Napier's reports on his investigations while he was comptroller of the laboratory at Woolwich were instrumental in introducing improvements in the manufacture of gunpowder. But as he would accept nothing "upon the score of perquisites," Sarah was sure his pay would never

exceed £300 a year, "which, being at the best a most uncertain income, and requiring such close attendance that he must not quit London for one week even, makes it *pas grande chose*." Some day, she hoped, her brother, the Duke, or her nephew, Charles Fox, would improve her husband's situation. Taking everything into consideration, however, their present way of life was most agreeable.

"This is my birthday," she wrote Susan on February twenty-fifth, 1783, "I am thirty-eight, and I see 'nothing new under the sun', except that till I was past thirty-six I find I never knew what real happiness was, which from my marriage with Mr. Napier till now is much greater than I had any idea of existing in human life, and it is no small satisfaction to be able to say that at thirty-eight, as at least it secures that happiness from all the dangers of change, in consequence of youth flying away. Indeed, if I am to judge from the present of the future, nothing can ever diminish my domestic comfort and happiness but illness or death, for you know I mind poverty as little as anybody." In this fashion, after nearly two years of marriage, she answered every one of Susan's objections.

In March, 1783, Henry Conway, Commander in Chief, gave Mr. Napier a Captain's commission in the 100th Regiment. Sarah had asked him to advance her husband, but she would have preferred a commission in the Guards, "for while a man belongs to the young Regiments, he is always at the mercy of the whims of Ministers, and in the Guards a man is never ordered out but on real service." The 100th Regiment was in the East Indies but had been ordered home. However, "should a whim take Mr. Conway to leave them there," Mr. Napier would have to go out to join it. In that case she would certainly go with him, bag and baggage, but she would take it hard if her powerful connections in the last two Ministries should end by sending her husband to the East Indies as a mere captain. Sarah was learning, as Susan had learned be-

fore her, that she could not count on her influential relatives to advance her husband.

The occasion never arose. The 100th Regiment returned to England and was ultimately disbanded, and Napier remained a Captain on half pay. And Sarah found herself more and more occupied in the nursery. Emily Louisa was born in July, 1783, and George Thomas in June, 1784. The family moved that year to Stretton House, a fine old mansion near Wolverhampton built after the designs of Inigo Jones—"well furnished, and a pretty garden, rather damp I fear, but yet it seems to agree with my children." As was natural, she became very much absorbed in them, and her letters abounded with accounts of their illnesses and teething, and her own "uncomfortable feels." Mr. Napier, who remained inactive, bore all this domesticity with imperturbable good humor. He was willing to play backgammon all the morning, cribbage all afternoon, and chess all night to please his friends. "A man who likes anything," as Mrs. Crewe said of him, "is quite a treasure in the country."

The good "Donny," as they called him, was perfect, except that he was not always able to provide very lavishly for the babies that followed one another into the world in rapid succession. So Sarah continued to prod her influential relatives. And since Susan O'Brien was trying to advance her former matinee idol to a government position by the same means, the two were suddenly in closer sympathy than they had been for years. However, Sarah did not share Susan's love of a grievance; if she thought her brother neglected her interests she told him so to his face. As for Charles Fox, she soon perceived that even with the kindest intentions he would never serve his friends effectually. He had not the faculty of obtaining favors. On one occasion she "had a great mind to be in a rage" with him, when he "got one Mr. Stanhope a company in the Guards, and the very next week the second place in the Ordinance, *sans souffler un mot* to us." But she



overcame her anger upon the reflection that "Charles has good qualities enough to atone for a thousand faults, and I have no right to expect from him an attention which no one relation of his ever yet acquired." So when Susan picked a quarrel with him for "cutting his relations," Sarah took pains to smooth out the misunderstanding, instead of taking Susan's side as she may have been tempted to do.

Although she often railed against Charles's "violence," Sarah was thrilled when he began to support the cause of human liberty in earnest. Amused by her nephew's extravagances, and awed by his disinterestedness, Sarah declared, in 1783: "I am so far from thinking that he seeks greatness, that I am sure greatness pursues him into gaming houses, etc., etc., and since the Fates have decreed him to be Minister can he avoid it? You will see, he will never keep it, but it will always come back to him." His part in life was far greater than hers, but she watched it with the understanding one has for one's nursery playmates, and when Fox's great bill for the better government of India was presented, unsuccessfully, on December eighth, 1783, she and Mr. Napier agreed, "'Tis the cause of humanity he supported." Whatever conclusions historians may draw, this proves that Sarah and her husband were good Whigs.

Sarah was developing an extraordinary ability to put herself into the other person's place. She had grown up in many ways since she had parted company with Sir Charles Bunbury. Even Lord William Gordon had taught her much. And now George Napier fostered her generous instincts, which was probably why he made her so happy. But she was not long permitted to rest on her laurels. She was faced, in the autumn of 1784, with a severe test from an unexpected quarter. Her beloved sister Louisa begged leave to adopt her thirteen-month-old daughter Emily. Louisa Conolly was childless, and she was rich. The change was greatly to the child's advantage, inevitably, and since Sarah and her sister

were so close, it involved no permanent estrangement between mother and daughter. But little Emily had "turned out quite beautiful," and to part with one of her babies, even to console her most intimate sister, must have been a heavy cross for a woman who had found out so belatedly that her real vocation was motherhood. Sarah's heartstrings tightened, but she remembered how Louisa's unflinching loyalty had helped her through the most trying period of her life, and at length she yielded. "When I consider who it is to, I think it a duty to my child quite incumbent on me."

Within the year, however, she was to undergo an ordeal even more severe. Louisa Bunbury was seized with a violent cold and cough. She went into a decline, and neither Sarah's efforts and the tender help of Mr. Napier, nor the diet of milk and bark prescribed by the physician, enabled her to throw off the malady. As Stretton was very damp, a change of climate was indicated. Immediately the kind Conollys urged Sarah to bring her entire family to Ireland. Their invitation must have seemed like a godsend, for Sarah was "breeding" again, and her concern for Louisa grew daily greater. In September the Napiers were settled at Castletown, where they were destined to remain for two years, and later to settle in the neighboring village of Celbridge.

Unfortunately, the change did not secure its chief object. Louisa Bunbury died on December fourteenth, 1785, and her death broke the strongest remaining link with the past. "All my occupations," Sarah told Susan, "were directed to her pleasure or use, all views for future plans of life had her for my first object, all my joy in the kindness of my nearest and dearest relations was doubled by their giving her an equal share of it . . . It is not reason, it is not what is left me (happy as it makes me) that can reconcile me to my loss, for how can I forget amidst all my family that she is wanting, whom every soul misses as much as I do."

But Sarah's new life now made so many claims on her ener-

gies that she had little opportunity for unhealthy grief. There was the new baby, little William Francis Patrick, born within a few days of Louisa's death. There were the usual childhood illnesses of her other small children. There was the pleasant and easygoing society of Castletown. Above all, there were Louisa and dear Mr. Conolly. To her great joy they had grown so fond of Mr. Napier that they loved him for his own sake, and not merely because he was good to his wife. "Mr. Conolly in particular has formed the strictest friendship with him, and I'm much mistaken in their characters if it ever changes." All in all, it was better not to return to Stretton, which could offer nothing but sad memories. They decided to remain at Castletown, that capacious and hospitable mansion of whose vast spaces Sarah's growing nursery occupied only a small fraction.

Here in the beautiful rooms of Castletown, with their exquisite plaster work, their Cipriano frescoes, and coffered ceilings, Louisa Conolly entertained in a spirit which was at once generous and independent. Never, to Sarah's astonishment, did she seek to enlarge her acquaintance or exchange civilities. She rarely paid visits, and she refused to receive callers who dropped in at odd times because she had more friends already than she could see comfortably. Now and then she went to town and greeted the world with so civil and good-natured a face that no one could remain angry with her. If a person seemed offended, she urged him to show his forgiveness by coming to dine with her at Castletown, and the invitation was always accepted. In summer Louisa offered her friends the beauties of the grounds and a variety of company, and in winter the Conollys gave a round of parties toward Christmas. She had developed a special technique, without inconvenience, for fulfilling her duty toward foreigners. On receiving formal notice of a distinguished stranger's arrival in Dublin, she sent a civil note asking him to dinner of a Sunday. If she liked him, she pressed him to stop for one

night when the house was full of company, or when she was giving a dance. Visitors, on taking their leave, always realized that Lady Louisa Conolly enjoyed her home and that she had ten thousand occupations, and they invariably implored her not to think of making them a formal visit. She took them at their word upon condition that they would come again.

Since she aimed at nothing, Lady Louisa's "peculiar character" had established her on an unusual footing "which nobody but herself would venture at." Society made great allowances for her, and she went her own way, contriving at once to give pleasure and to avoid boredom. She even, to Sarah's envy, escaped playing cards of an afternoon. Sarah was astonished and delighted with Louisa's way of life. "We have the world here," she wrote, "only once in the week telling the news, and we are rid of them soon."

In 1787 Sarah was "expecting" again, and the Conollys urged her to stay on, until after the birth of Richard Napier on August seventh. Then, as no one had tempted Mr. Napier from his retirement, they suggested a convenient house that was procurable in Celbridge. "I am sure you will be sorry when I tell you that we have taken up our abode in Ireland for good," Sarah wrote Susan in mid-September, "by the purchase of a house and some acres of land." She lamented a few of her English friends of whom distance would deprive her, "but exclusive of those few, I had not much temptation to live in the country [in England] and could not afford London, so that it was impossible to resist the pressing and repeated entreaties of our best and most constant friends the Conollys, who made a point of our taking advantage of a purchase, which in every respect suited us."

The house which the Napiers had taken "on a lease forever," intending to purchase it by small sums saved out of their yearly savings, stood a short distance from the western end of the village of Celbridge. It was a solid, square building of blue-gray limestone, three-storied, with many tall win-

dows in front and rear, and a hall door that looked north and was approached by arched steps spanning a wide stone area surrounding the basement. Green level fields spread around the house to the north and west, and to the south a long line of blue hills could be seen above the tops of oak and beeches. Since only the length of the village street separated the place from the beautiful park of Castletown, the Napier children would be able to continue their sports and rambles in the woods and waters of the Conollys' great domain. And their parents would continue to enjoy the company of orators, soldiers, wits and statesmen, who forgathered, together with less interesting people, in the Castletown drawing-rooms of a Sunday and on holidays. Also, Carton, the country seat of the Duchess of Leinster, Sarah's sister Emily, was not far from Celbridge; and her nephews the Fitzgerald boys, particularly Lord Edward, the eldest, were great favorites with their Uncle Donny and Aunt Sarah. Indeed, the situation of the new house suited them in every way, for since the renovations would not be completed until the following summer, they had the "advantages of overseeing our work people every day" from their very comfortable quarters in Castletown.

The early winter of 1790 found the Napiers settled in their "new, dear, cheerful, comfortable, and pretty house." Sarah now had had five boys—Henry Edward Napier had been born in March, 1789—and was hoping for another daughter to comfort her in her old age. There was still a great deal to be done about the new house, and she found it difficult to place shelves and rose bushes by proxy, to accomplish all those little finishings that require *l'oeil de la maitresse*. Fatigued by frequent child-bearing, she consoled herself by counting her blessings. Surely she had no right to complain when she had a new home, a pretty little flock of brats around the fireside, the affection of the Conollys, and the expecta-

tion that she and her husband could at last manage to live within their income. "In spite of this detestable climate (the only drawback to our satisfaction) . . . all together spreads a gleam of sunshine on us that has its full effect on Mr. Napier's spirits and on mine." And to crown her happiness, a daughter, Caroline Henrietta, was born in February.

This mild domestic bliss had not dulled Sarah's sense of humor, for in the spring she was writing her niece, Lady Sophia Fitzgerald, in a somewhat sharp vein, about the rubs of family life. "On Thursday I went to Lady Lamison's and to Mrs. Meynell's, which, as it was hot, certainly did fatigue me a little—but I was sure to make up for it on Friday by a quiet evening and early going to bed." This intention, however, was not to be fulfilled. "At eleven I was preparing to go to bed, when in walks Mr. Napier, *drunk as an owl*, with two Colonels, whom I had never seen, and Edward (Fitzgerald) as *drunk* as his good uncle."

Mr. Napier announced that he had brought these gentlemen to supper and that Sarah would now supply them with bread and cheese. The footman was ill; she had no idea what was in the pantry, or whether the cook was up at that late hour to dress it. But realizing that her husband was not in a way to understand reason on any subject, she put on the best face she could and fed them *tant bien que mal*. Edward Fitzgerald, who had "hollow legs," ate and drank for four, and carried on a reasonably coherent conversation with his aunt. The two Colonels sat and munched in silence, not daring to utter a word for fear of exposing themselves. Sarah filled them up with strong beer in the hope that if she made them drunk enough they would leave. But the stratagem failed, and Sarah retired to bed.

At three Mr. Napier woke her up to show her a boat close to the shore, which he and his friends had discovered. He and Colonel Macdonald had decided, he said, that it was manned by thieves, and so they had been lying out on the terrace with

pistols to shoot them dead if they attempted to land. This pretty piece of intelligence kept Sarah *en l'air* for two mortal hours, until the boat unexpectedly went off and left the Napier household safe at least for that night.

Saturday proved a day to be endured rather than enjoyed, and Sarah was determined to make up for lost sleep, come what might. But at twelve Mr. Napier, who had not been feeling any too well, was seized "with the gout in his stomach." The medicine he took added to his pain, and by two o'clock he was convulsed and could neither see nor hear. In panic Sarah sent for the local apothecary, Mr. Welch. He relieved her terror by assuring her that it was not an inflammation of the bowels as she feared, but just an ordinary bilious attack which castor oil would remove. His diagnosis proved correct. Within twelve hours Mr. Napier was free from pain, although the cure had left him so limp and yellow that Sarah was sure he would not be himself for a week. Her own terror and the night she had spent running up and down stairs had done little to lessen her fatigue, but now that it was all over she could not resist twitting the invalid on his owliness.

The tranquillity of the household was more seriously disturbed by Mr. Napier's "dreadful colds" which resulted ultimately in a severe inflammation of the lungs. Sarah took him and her eldest three children—she had left five at home with a clergyman's daughter—by sea to Bristol and Hot Wells, but though her husband's recovery was swift, he suffered thereafter from a tendency toward bronchitis.

Meanwhile forces more far-reaching than ill health emerged on the Napiers' horizon. Europe in 1792 was in the throes of an upheaval, and it appeared that England would soon be at war once more with France. Nor was peaceful Castletown entirely untouched. "The horrors of Paris exceed all imagination," Sarah declared with a shudder. And she added: "In Ireland there is a great spirit left, and it wholly

depends on Government to turn it to a proper channel. If they will divert it to the objects of improvements, all Irish will eagerly catch at a new object of improvement. I don't say they will follow it long, but they love novelty, and Government does very foolishly in trying to raise up quarrels between the Catholics and Protestants, for the purpose of an excuse for an union which will ruin Ireland, for the nasty Presbeterians will run away with the bone."

Conditions in Ireland were already more alarming and more critical than Sarah realized. Since the repeal in 1782 of Poynings Law and the Statute of George the Second, Ireland had enjoyed a measure of home rule, but the French Revolution had aroused hopes of even more freedom. One secret society, the United Irishmen, planned to obtain the help of France in overthrowing the yoke of the English government and to establish a republic in Ireland. Its members worked as agitators, encouraging the lawlessness which pervaded every class, in the hope that general confusion would further the cause of Irish freedom. The Irish Bill of 1792, introduced by Pitt, only made matters worse. It frightened the Protestants by granting the franchise to Catholics, and disgusted Catholics by forbidding them to sit in Parliament, so that their votes would be recorded for Protestants only. The uproar increased. Secret societies were formed on both sides, and riots occurred throughout the country with such violence that only military force could suppress them.

The Napiers were in the thick of the disturbances, but unperturbed by the alarms. "That good-natured Mrs. Crewe wrote to beg of us to take shelter at Crewe Hall," Sarah wrote Susan on January third, 1793, "and we got her letter of terrors just as we were preparing for a ball at Castletown, where we have passed a very merry Christmas, tho' cannons are sent down to the County of Louth, within twenty miles of us! The truth is, that it's all a bug-bear; unless the Catholics are very ill used indeed, nothing will tempt them to join the small por-



tion of Levelers and Presbeterian disturbers of peace, which every county now produces, but which really is a very small number in Ireland, if not worked up by ill usage. Next week will probably settle all this about the Catholics, and if they get their franchises, you may rely on it all will go smoothly; if not, God knows the consequences. All party is dissolved here"—at Castletown—"for there is such a variety of interests it could not be otherwise. The Duke of Leinster"—her nephew—"is the most steady friend to the Catholics and has set up a club called, 'The Association of the Friends of the Constitution, Liberty, and Peace'—to separate it quite from Levelers and from Government." To Sarah's joy the idea took very well, for she could not bear to have religion confuse the real issue.

The Duke of Leinster was not the only one of Sarah's relatives to espouse an advanced and clear-sighted policy. Her favorite nephew, Charles James Fox, had come out boldly in defense of the French Revolution and was protesting against the continual wars with France. In Sarah's eyes he was "more glorious than ever, with a few friends upholding his well-founded opinions in the midst of the confusion of prejudices, frights, and abuse, and resisting all temptation to fall from his noble height of principle into mean power and adulation. I never thought so well of him in my life, but I see he is lost as a Minister"—Fox was then Foreign Secretary—"but no matter for that, since he gains as an honest man."

Another favorite nephew, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, came home to Ireland that winter, bringing with him a pretty wife, the famous "Pamela," whom rumor declared to be the child of Philippe Égalité, the revolutionary Duc d'Orleans. Sarah took a liking to her at once: "I never saw such a sweet, little, engaging, bewitching creature as Lady Edward is, and childish to a degree with the greatest sense . . . I am sure she is not vile Égalité's child; it's impossible." The young Fitzgeralds were tremendously in love, and Sarah was thrilled

by their happiness. "Edward Fitzgerald," she purred, "has acted a romance all his life, and it is finished by his marriage with Pamela Seymour." The romance of Edward's life was almost finished; but had Sarah suspected the relation of the engaging pair to the new ideas of the revolution, she might have taken a different tone. For the seeds of Lord Edward's political romance, which was destined to end so tragically, were already sown and soon to germinate.

In February, 1793, France invaded the Austrian Netherlands and sent Louis the Sixteenth to the scaffold. Pitt ordered the French Minister to leave the country, and once again England was at war.

By mid-November the Honorable George Napier was seeking active service in the Army. To have remained a passive spectator would have been consonant with neither his principles nor his interest. He could not serve his country better than by pursuing the profession to which he was bred, the profession to which he was best suited and in which he had won a modest recognition by his twenty-six years of hard work.

For in twelve years of marriage he and Sarah had acquired no security for their children's future. Their family had increased to eight with the birth of Cecilia in 1791. And though they had a pleasant home in the country, with the advantages of Castletown at their door, their joint incomes barely served to feed and clothe their large brood. The boys attended the common school in the village; the girls learned their three R's from their mother, assisted perhaps by a clergyman's daughter. By practicing the strictest economy the Napiers had managed to live in reasonable comfort, but no such luxuries as a carriage, dress, or company had ever been possible. Neither Sarah nor her husband felt restricted by their poverty, but they had been haunted by the fear that their children would be left destitute at their deaths. So now, when the war brought Mr. Napier an opportunity to earn a small pittance

and launch his sons in the military profession, he was eager to take part in it. Sarah agreed with him perfectly in his decision, but she was equally determined not to forsake him so long as it was in her power to be of any comfort or use to him. She said she simply would not stay indolently at home while he was undergoing fatigues and dangers for their children's sakes.

Fortunately, her faithful maid, the same Susan Frost whom she had summoned from Barton to take charge of little Louisa Bunbury after the elopement with Lord William Gordon twenty-six years before—would act as dame to her boys when they returned from school, and take entire charge of her two little girls. Indeed, between Susan Frost and the local surgeon who visited the Napier nursery daily as a friend, and Louisa Conolly who was almost as much a mother to them as she was herself, Sarah had no fears about leaving her children to go abroad with “the best and most attached husband that ever woman was blessed with.”

Having settled the care of their family, they prepared “to march to any of the four quarters of the globe chance may direct.” Mr. Napier had a Captaincy in Doyle's or the Prince of Wales' Irish Regiment, and was raising recruits, but he was anxious to “chop and change for a majority.” Consequently, they might be sent anywhere. But Sarah had hopes that her husband's twenty-six years of persevering zeal in the service would meet with its reward from Lord Moira, now General Officer in the army and very friendly to him.

Her hopes were fulfilled. Early in 1794 Napier was appointed Deputy Quartermaster General to the army which Lord Moira was to command in Holland. The notice of his appointment appeared in the London Gazette of February 11-15, and the same publication printed an announcement concerning his eldest son in the issue of March 22-25: “Commissions dated January 31, 1794. 33d Regiment of Foot. Mr. Charles Napier to be Ensign.” This was afterwards Arthur

Wellesley's regiment, and the high regard the Duke of Wellington later held for Charles may have arisen from his creditable bearing as a youthful Ensign. It might be added that the brief notice marked an event of importance in the annals of the British Empire, as well as in the life of Lady Sarah.

Her husband left at once for England to attend to his new duties, and Sarah followed with Louisa Napier and her son Charles as soon as she had settled her household. "I go," she wrote Susan before setting out, "like a poor captain's wife, as I ought to do, in a chaise and pair, three of us (no maid) and one man on horseback; my stay in London a week at my sister's. I hope to look at all my friends, which is a great pleasure after nine years' absence, and then to pass my time comfortably at Cowes."

In high spirits if in lowly style, Sarah, now forty-eight years old, and already suffering from the early stages of the blindness that darkened her old age, set off to join her husband at the wars.

## XVII

### *The Wife of a True Military Man*

IN JUNE, 1794, the Napiers were still in Southampton, installed in three small bedrooms and a parlor in a cheap lodging house. Napier was to go to Holland as Deputy Quartermaster General with Lord Moira's army, with the rank of Major but since it was not yet fully organized, he remained in Southampton supervising a hundred details that required his attention. From eight in the morning until eleven at night a score of people of various denominations found their way into the small parlor that served as his office. The Commander-in-Chief *et sa troupe dorée* were introduced, and a succession of brigadier generals and their assistants. Commanding officers of regiments of artillery, sergeants, clerks, wagoners, and so forth marched in at all hours on business. The ladies of Southampton society, the officers' wives, and sometimes the officers themselves, dropped in to pay their respects to Lady Sarah. In addition to all these, the half dozen young men belonging to the departments were always running in and out, like children, for a hat or a paper they had forgotten. But none of their visitors, in Sarah's opinion, were as troublesome as the Toulonnese people, six hundred of whom had enlisted in a French Corps in Southampton, and many more as sailors paid on board the transports. An endless succession of these French officers came in dozens, "*pour faire leurs hommages a mon General*"—meaning Major

Napier—and begging to know who was to pay them. When he bowed, and said not himself, they bowed and pressed ten thousand demands. The French artillery officers in particular were a nuisance, for they had discovered that the field pieces in England were of no use to them, and they wanted Major Napier to send to Bruges for some cannon recently captured by the Duke of York.

“If you can suppose anything more troublesome than a Frenchman, it is a recruit,” Sarah declared in a letter to Susan, “one hundred of which we want beyond all description, for this relates to our *own* business.” Major Napier had made a request that he be allowed “to raise a regiment.” As a recruiting agent, he was buying recruits and securing others by influence. His contract specified that he would get a Lieutenant Colonelcy for one hundred recruits, and he had already raised about thirty of them in Ireland. As he refused to ask leave of absence to go out recruiting himself, preferring his public duty to his own advancement, Sarah undertook to finish the business for him. She was fairly successful in finding men five feet four inches, for ten guineas or as much under as possible, but as she had no place to work except their “little coffee room,” where her husband wrote and talked, she often disturbed him very much. Instead of protesting, good-natured Major Napier simply marched his callers into their bedroom without the least ceremony.

Then, suddenly, Major Napier was sent to join Lord Moira at Ostend. “My only comfort in his absence, besides knowing he is in pursuit of what he has called his duty for twenty-eight years, is the occupation of promoting his advancement in a line of life he is so ardently attached to that no disappointment can conquer it. He has made me a proselyte to his sentiments,” Sarah confessed, “and tho’ it must be in perpetual sacrifices of my own peace and happiness, I am convinced that a true military man, of which I see very few, will never bring about any point of pecuniary advantage to him-

self or his family, but in that line to which they have devoted all their abilities." The value of a military career was uppermost in her thoughts at the time, because Major Napier's passion for the Army was so intense that he was determined that every one of their five sons should serve their country, and take their chance, as he had done, for a fortune. Convinced that her husband's active turn of mind, quickness and perseverance would have enabled him to acquire a sufficiency for his family, large as it was, in any other line of occupation, she demurred at his decision. For if her husband with all his ardor for the service was not further advanced at forty-three, how could she be certain that her sons would fare even as well?

The war news that reached her within a few days was not of a sort to raise her spirits. It has a familiar ring in modern ears: The British reinforcements had reached Ostend too late to check the victorious advance of the French through Belgium. Receiving no word from her husband, Sarah fell a prey to increasing anxiety. Where was he, and what had happened to him? At last she had a letter from a friend, Mrs. Pakenham, saying that Major Napier had passed "a most comfortable evening *en trio* with Mr. P. and her, talked over all the war, etc." He had been in good spirits, and hopeful of a speedy and happy conclusion to the campaign. He had come in a yacht of Lord Darnly's via Deal or Dover, but had returned to Ostend by packet the next day. Certain that an action either had taken place or was about to occur, Sarah found this news of her husband tantalizing, and the suspense hard to bear.

In the midst of these alarms she received a piece of good news from Susan. Through an old protégé of Lord Ilchester, Susan had succeeded in pushing through Major Napier's request that he be allowed to devote his time to the raising of recruits. Her husband was now free to return to Ireland. "To you, my dearest Lady Susan," Sarah wrote, "I shall owe what

I look upon as the greatest happiness of the moment." And Susan's intervention had come in the nick of time. On July fifteenth the French under Kléber had decisively defeated the Austrians at Louvain, and it became necessary for Lord Moira's expeditionary force to fall back. "I trust in God," said Sarah, "they are making an honorable retreat, for I confess that my military spirit would not be satisfied with a shabby one, because he would be so miserable about it." If Susan had not succeeded in pushing through his request before Moira's force was disbanded, Napier would have had to return to the 87th as a Captain on half pay. But now their worries were ended. Major Napier rejoined Sarah in Southampton, where their reunion was made doubly joyful by another piece of good<sup>d</sup> news: Mr. Conolly had already secured a Lieutenant Colonelcy for Napier in the newly raised Londonderry Regiment. He was gazetted on August twenty-fourth, 1794, and the Napiers hastened to Ireland—Sarah to Celbridge, her husband to Londonderry.

After two weeks with Louisa Conolly and the young Napiers, who had apparently thriven during her absence, Sarah repaired to Londonderry and found her husband "slaving himself as usual." Their friend, Lord Moira, was in Southampton, and "Derry," after the hustle and bustle of the Channel town, was dull in the extreme. The regiment was incomplete, active service seemed far off, and the Lieutenant Colonelcy was not the boon she had expected. "Its having been so long sighed after makes it more precious than it is in reality, for as it's a new raised Regiment, the half pay is only eight shillings per day, which don't do more than feed eight children, and we have nine and ourselves to feed, clothe, educate . . ." This, of course, was not strictly true, as the Conollys supported her eldest daughter, Emily, but Sarah was in no mood to let Susan believe that she had established the Napiers in affluence. For, to add to Sarah's troubles, Susan, who was thoroughly steeped in the Fox method of advance-



ment, was demanding a *quid pro quo*: Couldn't something be done in Ireland for Mr. O'Brien? Exasperated by Susan's wishful thinking and Mr. O'Brien's limp expectancy, Sarah intimated that it would do him no harm to *earn* a place. How could she, set down at "the furthest limits of the land," do anything for him? And hadn't Susan heard that Ireland was on the brink of civil war?

For by 1794 all hopes for a peaceful settlement of the Irish troubles seemed doomed in the rising tide of religious and social passion. The eternal cycle of thoughtless oppression and bloody insurrection had come full circle once more, and the wretched country—with its corrupt and uncomprehending aristocracy, its ferocious commonalty, its distracted government, and divided people—furnished the agents of the French Revolution with a soil fertile beyond their wildest hopes. The secret society of United Irishmen continued to agitate for the ousting of the English and the establishment, with French aid, of the Irish Republic. The Catholic peasantry brooded over their misery and their wrongs, and formed yet other secret societies, the Defenders and Peep o'Day Boys, whose outrages spread panic among the Protestant ruling classes. And the Protestant landowners, scouting any notion of concessions to men whom they considered revolutionaries, banded together in Orange Societies and strove to hold the country down by terror and bloodshed.

Sarah had watched the blunders of the Government during the terms of two successive Lords Lieutenant—Lord Westmoreland, whom she considered too complaisant, and Lord Fitzwilliam, whom she admired because he had completely disregarded the policy of his predecessor. And now he had been replaced by Lord Camden, an avowed enemy of conciliation. She dreaded that an uprising might result from the continuation of a policy so destructive to Ireland, "which unhappily is so ripe for troubles that all they want is an excuse, and millions are to be found in the general neglect of all de-

partments, the misuse of money, and leaving the country defenceless." To secure peace in Ireland, surely the first object of the Government should be to reform all these flagrant abuses.

Sarah's analysis of the situation was always shrewd and clear-headed; Mr. Gerald Campbell in "*Pamela and Lord Edward Fitzgerald*," even goes so far as to deplore the failure of the authorities to consult her. But her position was a ticklish one. Her sympathies lay with the Irish peasantry, yet she never allowed them to extend to the peasantry's revolutionary tactics. She blamed the vacillation of the Government, and particularly the British Government represented by Lord Camden, for the woes of Ireland: "I think the *new ones* & the *old devils* are like a hackney coachman set to drive managed horses, they looked frightened & are doubtful which is the best chance to save their necks, whipping or coaxing." Yet she found that family ties bound her inextricably to the interest of the Protestant landowners. Her husband was in command of English troops; her brother-in-law, Mr. Conolly, was a member of Parliament and in fairly close connection with the Castle; her nephew was the Duke of Leinster. And though all three of them supported the Catholics in their legal steps toward emancipation, they were in duty bound to oppose incipient rebellion. Sarah's position was further complicated by the fact that her favorite nephew, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, was already deeply implicated in the insurrection.

It is doubtful whether Lord Edward's relatives were aware how far his radical ideas had led him. They knew, of course, that he had become infected with the fever of the French Revolution at the time of his marriage, for he had publicly renounced his title and in consequence had been promptly dismissed from the British army. Probably they regarded "dear Eddie" as an incurably romantic young man. His life had been a succession of such incidents. Soon after his entry into Irish politics, for example, he had given up a seat in

Parliament in disgust because no reform of that body seemed possible. In Sarah's eyes her nephew's heart—in spite of his quixotic knight-errantry—was undoubtedly in the right place. Hadn't he made a violent speech against the former complaisant Lord Lieutenant, Lord Westmoreland? Wasn't his life with Pamela an unending romance? Sarah did not know, of course, that her nephew and his friend, Arthur O'Connor, had begun to incur the suspicions of the Government—and with reason, since they were contemplating membership in the United Irishmen. If Sarah had known what was brewing in the Fitzgerald household—for Pamela shared her husband's secrets and did not discourage his intentions—it would have been a source of grave disquiet to her.

For Edward Fitzgerald was skating on perilously thin ice. He had hatched a plan, with the ill-fated O'Connor, to open negotiations with the French Minister at Hamburg. An informer had turned over to the British Government the evidence of his intentions, and when the Fitzgeralds reached London the Duke of York took Pamela aside at Devonshire House to warn her that everything was known. Unaware perhaps that the beautiful young wife took an active part in furthering her husband's designs, he advised her to persuade Lord Edward not to go abroad. His advice, however, was futile. Fitzgerald and O'Connor proceeded to Hamburg, and once they had broached the subject of an invasion to the French Minister they had embarked on a course from which there was no turning back.

Even the supine Government at Dublin admitted that there was danger of invasion. Troops were to be sent to the coast, and Lord Camden endeavored to raise a Yeomanry to act as a home guard in their absence. Sarah thought the idea a good one, but feared that because the Government had so completely monopolized all county interest everywhere for ages past, no men would be left for the Yeomanry. What would happen, she wondered, if the invasion actually took place?

"While the troops are busy, the rabble will plunder every house; that's a clear case, and by no means a pleasant perspective."

The Londonderry Regiment which Colonel Napier had worked so hard to discipline had, to his disgust and in defiance of the men's engagements, been sent to the West Indies. Napier became Chief Field Engineer on the staff of Lord Carhampton, the Irish Commander-in-Chief. His duties kept him away from home a good deal, and he was torn between anxiety for his family and his public duty. Night after night marauders were assailing the dwellings around Castle-town and Celbridge in search of arms. But he knew that he could count on Sarah's stout heart and never failing good sense to make the best of things at home.

Sarah was not in the least afraid of the Catholics, "but very much of the mob in all places," and so she was preparing "to stay and guard my garrison with my five boys, Charles at the head, who has just got a new horse, and I dare say thinks himself and his horse equal to Alexander and Bucephalus." For the future conqueror of Scinde was already, at fifteen, displaying his military genius. Although he had been sent back to school when his family returned to Ireland, he had organized his schoolmates, at their parents' expense, into a volunteer corps equipped with uniforms, colors, drums, and wooden fusils with well-hardened bayonets. He drilled his school fellows indefatigably in the use of these heavy weapons. As for George, Sarah's second boy, he was like an infant Hotspur. Both assured her that their school volunteer corps would rally to her defense, armed to the teeth with their wooden bayonets—even if the alarm sounded after their bedtime.

Susan Frost, Sarah's faithful maid, had already shown her mettle while the Napiers were in Southampton. With only the aged man-servant Lauchlin as her aide-de-camp, she had stood off several hundred Defenders who had come in quest

of arms. While bullets shattered the windows, while the Defenders battered at the hall door with an oaken beam, Susan had stood, pistols in hand, shouting defiance until the Conollys' bailiff arrived with a band of armed servants and raised the siege. The mark of the battering ram could still be seen on the massive hall door, and the sight was a constant reminder of what might be repeated at any moment.

Even one's own servants might be implicated in these nocturnal imbroglios. "Alas," Sarah wrote, "we are but too well

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a source of misery to all Sarah's relatives and to herself in particular. Were there not larger issues at stake than the defection of a few servants?

Bloodshed was almost a daily occurrence in the neighborhood of Castletown and the peaceful village of Celbridge. The soldiers, who had been turned at large to live in free quarters, made war on the Yeomanry, who promptly revenged themselves on the military and on such neighbors as they disliked for political or religious reasons. Both Yeomen and soldiers ranged about the countryside, shooting wantonly at unarmed men laboring in the fields. Their victims were brought into Celbridge to be treated for their wounds, and Sarah may have been called upon to minister to some casualty of guerrilla warfare carried to her house. Such outrages there was little hope of suppressing, for the magistracy was partisan, and acted with equal violence and cruelty.

Nor was the Government doing much to mitigate the fever of civil passion; worse, they were actually, Sarah thought, fomenting it, in the hope of forcing matters to the point where total suppression of Irish independence would become necessary. "They force insurrection *à tout bout de champ*, and so many small disturbances work all together into a general ferment from which discontent has but too fine a field for breeding troubles, that it will soon be beyond the power of man to stop." Yet, affiliated as she was with the Protestant landowning class, she could not look with favor on the cause of Irish independence. "Granting we have no advantage from the English Government (which is not granted, because not true) the overturning it and becoming an Independent people is not practicable without horrors worse a million times than the English Government; nor can it come without the French whose alliance is sure to be usurpation, despotism and complete poverty, if the invasion succeeded . . . I really do think that to try to promote our shaking off the yoke of England by means of the French at this moment of danger,

is cruel to poor Ireland in the most barbarous degree—for it is egging on the poor deluded people of Ireland to dash into certain misery and destruction during the lives of the present race.”

It was precisely such an effort and such a foreign alliance that her favorite nephew, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, was even then egging on the Irish to undertake. Sarah had heard something about it, for Edward had already had high words with his discerning aunt. “How I should like,” Pamela wrote her husband, “to know about the scene which Aunt Sarah made you. She is a very singular creature. Be sure, my Angel, that I will never tell her anything but what I am willing that the whole universe should know of, and that I shall be dry and impracticable on all points of curiosity.”

The young wife was expecting her second child in the spring of 1798, and she was staying at Leinster House to await her confinement. Lord Edward had but little time to spare her that winter. His duties as Colonel of the Kildare Regiment and head of the Military Committee of the United Irishmen kept him busy. He was constantly riding out into the countryside to inspect the secret drillings, held nightly on the hillsides near Dublin, or slipping out to some clandestine meeting.

Already Lord Edward's relations with his family were somewhat strained. They ignored the full extent of his commitments, but they knew him to be a friend of the notorious O'Connor whose treasonable writings had landed him finally in jail. Lord Edward admitted he could no longer meet his liberal brother, the Duke of Leinster, without embarrassment, and whenever the young conspirator visited his sister, Lady Lucy Anne, at Leinster House, he was obliged to sneak upstairs to her room, like a thief, in order to avoid a painful encounter. Yet Lady Lucy Fitzgerald herself, who shared her hot-headed brother's political convictions and who was so like him “that she was just himself dressed in women's

clothes," had no notion of the extent of his activities or of the bottomless abyss which yawned before him and the amazing Pamela.

Meanwhile, the toils of treason were closing tighter and tighter round him. His position as a leader of the United Irishmen had been revealed to the Government in September, 1797, by the informer, McNally. He was definitely known to be on intimate terms with the proponents of massacre and assassination. Then in February, 1798, his close friend, Arthur O'Connor, who had recently been released from jail, was arrested in the act of hiring a fishing boat to carry him to France. O'Connor's arrest dismayed the conspirators; nevertheless, they decided to hold the meeting of the Provincial Directory of Leinster (the United Irishmen) scheduled for March twelfth at the house of Oliver Bond, the draper, at 13 Bridge Street, Dublin. Thomas Reynolds, a conspirator turned informer, and a man whom Lord Edward had befriended and pushed forward, warned the Government of the meeting. At the last moment Reynolds' heart misgave him, for he went to Leinster House late on the evening of March eleventh and advised Lord Edward not to attend. The next morning a number of conspirators were seized by the Government at the house of Bond. Lord Edward was not among them. He had vanished without leaving a trace. Not even Pamela knew where he was.

Ten days passed without alarm, and then came news that the authorities had ransacked Leinster House, and that Pamela, ill and about to be confined, had had to give up all her husband's papers and her own private letters. Sarah hurried with Louisa Conolly to Pamela's bedside. They found her optimistic. Edward, she told them, had written nothing that incriminated him. There was every reason to suppose that he had eluded the authorities. Besides, how could the Government arrest the man who was the idol of all Ireland? Pamela did not know, of course, that the Government was in



possession of more incriminating evidence against her husband than was contained in the papers she had yielded, or that the authorities were now thoroughly alarmed by the conspiracy. But she probably did know, now, where her husband was hiding.

Days of unspeakable anxiety were in store for Pamela. Martial law was proclaimed on March thirtieth, and the barbaric cruelties which ensued only strengthened Lord Edward's hot-headed determination to go through with the insurrection. His stepfather and boyhood tutor, Mr. Ogilvy, who had crossed to Dublin on purpose to dissuade him, hinted that the Government would welcome his departure from Ireland. In fact, the Chancellor, Lord Clare, had said to Ogilvy: "For God's sake, get this young man out of the country! The ports shall be thrown open to you and no hindrance offered." To this, when it was repeated to him, Lord Edward replied that he would never desert those whom he had led into danger and who could not escape. Pamela, at one with him in everything, decided to stay on in Dublin. Despite her Aunt Sarah's protests, she moved from Leinster House to a small dwelling in Denzil Street, where Lord Edward was able to communicate with her. He twice visited her in disguise; the second time he came dressed as a woman. Her concern for his safety and the strain of her own irregular existence brought on a premature confinement.

Sarah finally heard of Pamela's illness through Lady Moira, and when she arrived at the bedside she found her niece "feverish, low, and weak, but having no fears of difficulty with the milk which ran in plenty and the infant quite well. . . . She was strongly affected on seeing me, and in spite of my avoiding the subject, gave me renewed and repeated proofs that nothing could be done to him [Lord Edward] even if he was in Government hands. Indeed, I wanted not such assurances, but they are always pleasant."

Although a warrant had long since been issued against

Lord Edward, the entire family appeared to share Pamela's ill-founded optimism concerning the inviolability of his freedom. Even after May eleventh, when the Government, at wit's end to stave off the general uprising which had been fixed for the twentieth, offered a reward of £1000 for Lord Edward's apprehension, his relatives persisted in the belief that the charm, the great social position, the universal popularity of the romantic young conspirator would protect him. They were to be disillusioned.

On the evening of the twentieth, Sarah's two daughters, Louisa and Emily, were at the play with Lady Castlereagh and Mrs. Pakenham, in the next box to the Lord Lieutenant. Suddenly, the news was brought to Lord Camden's box—the girls could hear it all—that Lord Edward had been taken. Louisa Napier was so overcome that Lady Moira took her at once to Moira House, where Pamela was now staying. But the brave little wife took the terrible news much better than anyone had dared to hope.

The story of Lord Edward's capture reached Castletown the next morning. Louisa Conolly and Sarah were very much upset and profoundly shocked. After a hysterical scene, Colonel Napier, who was recuperating from an illness brought on by strain and anxiety, set off for Dublin to visit the prisoner. He was peremptorily refused permission to interview Lord Edward. "I went," he wrote, "to the poor sufferer's wife, who kept up by her spirits, bore her misfortunes like a heroine. Alas, she does not know what I dread to be true, that Government have strong and even indubitable proofs of his treason."

But treason, as it turned out, was never to be the issue. Lord Edward had fought off his assailants, stabbing one with a dagger, and firing on the other fatally. In the melee he had been shot himself; the bullet had lodged in his shoulder, and he was lying ill in Newgate Prison. The wound, according to the reports, was not serious, and the family clung stubbornly

to their hopes. The worst that they feared for Lord Edward was that he might be charged with manslaughter. Had not the Duchess of Leinster in England enlisted powerful aid in behalf of her son? And were not the Duke of Richmond, Charles Fox, and also Mr. Richard Sheridan planning even now to cross the Irish Channel to assist at the trial?

Lord Edward, however, already knew that he would never be brought to trial. Lockjaw had set in, and the prisoner's last agony was to be increased by a dismal coincidence. One of his fellow conspirators was executed in the courtyard below his windows, and the shouts of the mob rang clearly in the ears of the dying man. "God look down upon those that suffer!" Lord Edward cried. "God preserve me and have mercy on me and on those that act with me!" Despite the remonstrances of the surgeon, he rose and began walking about. By degrees he became so violent that the attendants were unable to confine him to his bed. For upwards of twenty minutes he paced the narrow room, swearing and crying out against his jailers. At length the paroxysm passed, and he acknowledged, with a gentle courtesy which melted the hearts of those who attended him, that the heads of men in his situation were often unsettled. Gradually he fell into a stupor; when his brother Harry arrived with his Aunt Louisa Conolly, he scarcely recognized them; and two hours later he was dead.

All this Sarah probably learned. But she chose to record only Louisa's account of her few minutes with her nephew. Sarah wished to spare poor Pamela, who had been sent to England, the knowledge of her young husband's agony, and in her letters she never divulged the dreadful facts of the surgeon's report. "He lived and died," she told Susan, "the most benevolent of mankind, and his inhuman persecutors would blacken his memory after having brought on his death by depriving him of every comfort of mind they could rob him of, but his soul was not in their power, thank God!"

## XVIII

### *Lengthening Shadows*

THE SUMMER of 1798 was a sad and anxious time for Sarah and her family. The wretchedness of her two sisters, and her own grief at the death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, combined to "form a picture of affliction that would have sunk us all here," she wrote Susan on July twentieth, "had not so great an object as rebellion and civil war at our doors roused us." As the insurrection spread, the Province of Leinster suffered more scenes of bloodshed and misery than occurred in the north, south, or west, where the militia remained loyal to the Government. Two hundred insurrectionists had recently forced their way through the park gates of Castletown and gathered on the front lawn. Although they had dispersed quietly, it had been thought prudent to put Castletown into a state of defense. At the moment, Sarah and her children had taken refuge there, in fear that their house in Celbridge might be burnt. The rebels were camped all about, at Blackmore Hill near Rushborough, and in Lord Miltown's house, and in another camp at Tragh, and in another at Staplestown near the Bog of Allen. At Dunboyne, where the first breaking out had appeared, the town was burnt down to a few houses. Mr. Conolly had been made quite sick by the destruction in the country from Sallens to Kilcullen Bridge. "Many years," he sighed, "could not restore this mischief."

Many families fled to Dublin, but Colonel Napier soon fortified his house, armed his five sons, and offered an asylum to all who were willing to resist the insurgents. About a dozen responded, and prepared to defend Celbridge against attack from the insurgent camp a few miles away. At last a company of Derry Militia arrived to reinforce Castletown. Colonel Napier was virtually accepted as the commander because of his knowledge of war, and he frequently scoured the countryside with his eldest son. "One very dark night," William Napier recounts in his life of his eldest brother, "they came suddenly upon an armed body; both sides halted, and a fight seemed impending. But, suspecting the truth, Colonel Napier instantly gave a loud military order as a test, and a cry of recognition was heard. The Grenadiers of the Cork Militia were in front! At that moment the moon shone out, and Charles Napier, very diminutive for his age, was seen with his small fusil charging bayonets in opposition to Tim Sullivan, the biggest man of the Cork Militia. Tim looked down in astonishment an instant, and then catching his small foe up in his arms, kissed him."

The Grenadiers were garrisoned in Celbridge, and Tim Sullivan thereafter made a pet of his "inimy," as he called Charles. The incident had practical results as well, for Colonel Napier immediately offered his counsel to the two officers. Captain Rowland and Lieutenant Hewitt accepted his leadership very gratefully, for they were young and inexperienced and somewhat nonplused on finding themselves in the perilous position of having to hold and defend a small town with eight undisciplined soldiers. Under Colonel Napier's direction they constructed some field works with such skilful adaptation to the locality that the eight thousand insurgents in the vicinity never dared a trial beyond some firing at the out-sentries.

Although her husband's strength now seemed equal to the demand made on him, Sarah prayed that the continuous

strain might not essentially hurt him. Mr. Conolly, also, was exerting himself night and day to protect them and had prevented many "horrible things" from happening. By the end of July, Sarah almost dared to believe that they had "stemmed the torrent till Lord Cornwallis's arrival, whose pacific intentions leaves room to hope for peace and quietness."

Her hopes were justified; Lord Cornwallis's firm and tactful policy gradually restored peace and tranquillity throughout Ireland. In March, 1799, Sarah wrote Susan that there was no longer any cause to fear for her safety, and that she entertained none, "beyond the general and great cause that Ireland would be soon lost to the Crown." As she grew older, Sarah cherished a sentimental fondness for the King because of his youthful passion for herself, and she now excused his mistreatment of Ireland on the ground that George the Third had suffered as much from the bad policy of his Ministers as had his subjects. Sarah was an incurable royalist at heart, and so was her husband.

But when Lord Cornwallis sent for Colonel Napier in the spring of 1799 and offered him the place of Comptroller of Army Accounts, the Colonel declined. First, because it was a civil appointment; he could not take to a desk after serving His Majesty for above thirty years; second, he had such an abhorrence of the character and conduct of the Irish administration that he dreaded the appearance of having any connection whatever with such a set of scoundrels; third, he feared that Lord Cornwallis was offering him the place as a favor to Mr. Conolly, and he positively refused taking any favor through the medium of his friends.

Lord Cornwallis brushed aside all his objections. "Napier," he said, taking both the Colonel's hands, "we are old friends, old soldiers, and we understand each other. I have the greatest friendship for Lady Sarah, and do not vex me so much as to let me quit this kingdom without doing something for all

those little fellows I saw the other day. I give you my word that no soul ever recommended you or suggested you—no, not even our friend Conolly. I want a person of trust, of abilities, of firmness, and of integrity to fill this place, which I laid my hands on instantly for you. Don't refuse me. I shall be miserable if you do."

The good Colonel found this argument unanswerable, and his promotion was announced in the *Annual Register* of February nineteenth, 1799. Although Lord Cornwallis had assured them that the office would not interrupt the life at Celbridge, in Sarah's opinion he had evidently known very little about the duties of the Comptroller. Soon she was in Dublin looking for "a dirty lodging" to pass the summer in, and reflecting grimly as she did so that the financial advantages of her husband's new place were not sufficient to console them for the lost comforts of home. Had he not renounced one hundred and fifty good English pounds—his half pay—for "only the remainder of six hundred Irish"? With two households to maintain, the increase certainly would not amount to very much. She was the more discouraged because her husband detested his new occupation, although now that the die had been cast he was determined to acquit himself according to the most exacting standards of honor, gratitude, and perseverance. One thought, however, consoled her: Since her husband was not answerable to the Irish administration, and as his work was confined solely to military departments, they could "treat the dirty Ministers with sovereign contempt."

They moved into a small corner house in Dublin. While Colonel Napier worked loyally to put in order the military accounts which he had found in disgraceful confusion, Sarah took advantage of the city to obtain capable masters for her children. To her dismay, the confinement made her husband quite ill, and she had to insist that he should allow himself a ride in the late afternoon as a restorative. But they both dis-

liked living in the city. Their discontent was aggravated by the reflection that all Ireland was gently returning to perfect tranquillity and industry, and that those who were so happy as to have no office were free to enjoy their roses and honeysuckle in peace. "Mine blow in vain for me," Sarah sighed, "I only go out of a Sunday like a cit."

The Act of Union with England, accomplished in the fall of 1799, brought about a better government than for centuries before. But peace was scarcely restored to Ireland before Bonaparte's shadow fell across the Continent, and Sarah could not conceal from herself that her children had been born in unfortunate times. "But sometimes I flatter myself that those very bad times work up as many dormant good passions as bad ones, and I hope my children may possess them and earn their future happiness by virtues, even (though like gold) it is tried by fire." Before the year was up, Charles and William had gone to quarters; and on January first, 1800, Lord Cornwallis gave George Napier a Cornetcy in the 24th Light Dragoons. The fifteen-year-old fireeater worried the life out of the tailor and succeeded in getting his uniform finished in record time. Arrayed in his new splendor, he hastened to his mother and knelt at her feet. Sarah promptly fulfilled his fondest expectations; as she placed his helmet on his head she repeated the motto engraved on it, "Death or Glory!" The young paladin, deeply moved, instantly made an inward vow to keep the command as his watchword in the hour of battle.

Approaching fifty, Sarah was still hale and hearty, although she suffered from an occasional violent inflammation on her face, and her eyes were failing fast. She regarded such distresses as the necessary accompaniments of age, and rejoiced in an unimpaired vitality. Time, however, was beginning to take its reckoning from the men in her family. Her elder brother, the Duke of Richmond, had become a chronic suf-



ferer from the gout; her other brother, Lord George Lennox, had an excessively severe case of St. Vitus dance; and poor Mr. Conolly's nerves were quite gone as a result of the recent agitations and alarms. Most distressing of all, her own Donny, who had just been created a brevet Colonel, was growing increasingly subject to bronchitis and pulmonary infections of all kinds. Sarah attributed his decline to the wretched office he was compelled to work in, and complained that it was "as black as the Black Hole of Calcutta." Her wrath produced the desired effect; at last he obtained a large, airy office. For a time Colonel Napier's health and spirits seemed to revive, but by 1803 his cough had become chronic.

Sarah kept her fears in leash until the spring of 1804, when his health suddenly took a turn for the worse. The doctors solemnly bent their brows and pronounced the malady "a consumptive complaint." Sarah, who had lost a beloved daughter by the same dread disease, wasted no time; in June the Napiers were established at Hot Wells near Bristol. The sea air and the waters revived Colonel Napier again, and Sarah, vastly relieved, took advantage of his improvement to summon her old friends and her relatives. It was so very pleasant to be back in England! Her buoyancy is the more incredible because she was suddenly threatened with total blindness. "What you call a complaint in my eyes," she wrote Susan, "is only losing the sight of one eye completely, and a daily risk of losing the other unless I sit in the dark musing, which I can not bear, and so I write and read. I do all sorts of wrong things."

Susan responded to Sarah's gallant appeal, and brought her husband to stay at the Napiers' lodging in August. By some miracle, their friendship survived the acid test of reunion after twenty years, and they doubtless spent hours rehearsing various family and personal events that they had hitherto discussed in their correspondence. For Susan had been very ill in the spring of '98, and the physicians had

feared cancer. At the very moment of submitting to the knife, Susan had written Sarah a diverting letter. Sarah had been profoundly shocked on learning of Susan's suffering, and her admiration for her friend's fortitude had been boundless. Then there was the eternal question of Mr. O'Brien's place, which was happily settled by his appointment as Receiver General of Taxes for the County of Dorset. Much more diverting was Charles Fox's marriage to Mrs. Armistead; although the lady was no great catch, Sarah pointed out that it was better that Charles should be seen with his wife than with his mistress. It was twenty years since Fox had established Mrs. Armistead at St. Anne's Hill where she took charge of his health, and made him happy.

In between gossips, Sarah confessed that her chief satisfaction lay in her children. The eldest three had already risen to be lieutenants on active duty. Richard, her fourth boy, was studying for the Church, and Henry, the fifth, was going to sea, "by his own positive desire." "All five," Sarah boasted, "have good hearts, good principles, and good friends. As to their good sense, time alone must prove if I am partial in thinking that they don't absolutely want it, tho' I by no means brag of genius or shining abilities among them." Although she could not foresee how gloriously her sons were destined to acquit themselves, she spoke with the confidence of a fond mother and a loyal wife. With such a father to train them, how could they turn out other than like himself?

After Susan's departure, Sarah's thoughts harked back to their youth; and on September tenth she wrote: "I am one who will keep the King's marriage day with unfeigned joy and gratitude to heaven that I am not in Her Majesty's place. It was the happiest day for me, in as much as I like my dear sick husband better than a King; I like my sons better than the Royal sons, thinking them better animals and more likely to give comfort in my old age."

Of such comfort she was shortly to have great need. Within

a week or two she had to confess that her husband's health had shown no definite improvement. In October his fever returned, and after a week he was so wasted that Sarah implored Susan to return. "I am able to write," she said, "from that fictitious calmness that precedes despair." Susan went to Hot Wells at once, and remained with Sarah until Colonel Napier's death on October thirteenth, 1804. He was buried at the Church of St. Mary, Redland, near Clifton, where his monument still stands. When it was all over, Sarah and her daughters went to Cirencester House, in Gloucestershire, which had been lent to her by her brother George's girl, Lady Bathurst. Louisa Georgina, the eldest daughter of the Bathursts, did the honors in her parents' absence. Her father and mother hoped, she said, that her dear Aunt Sarah would rest in Cirencester House until she had recovered from the long strain of her husband's illness and death. Sarah was infinitely touched by her little great-niece's tact and sympathy, and she was further supported by Mrs. Johnstone, Colonel Napier's sister, and by her own sister, Louisa Conolly.

She needed all the strength they could give her, for her whole being had become entwined in that of her husband, and it must have seemed to her as if she had lost the better part of herself. She, who had sought so recklessly for fulfilment in a man, had found true and complete happiness, beyond her dreams, in quiet Colonel Napier. Donny had never failed her. His tenderness and love, his simple patriotism and manliness, had given her what she had always instinctively craved. Never, during their twenty-three years of married life, had she experienced one pang of disappointment. Her only anxiety had been her concern for his advancement and the future of their children. They had been perfectly happy together, and now she had lost him.

It had never been Sarah's habit to give way to vain regret, and in a few days she declared she was longing to go at once "from a palace to a cottage, for little better must my future

be." Colonel Napier's long illness had brought unexpected expenses, and she was anxiously trying to determine the best way to settle her debts. "For this purpose," she wrote Susan, "I propose to mortgage the estate [Celbridge] and borrow the sum of £3000, which would clear all I owe, and the letting of the house and land would pay the interest. I made this proposal to my Brother Richmond, as to the person on whom I felt myself most entitled to ask a favor of, conceiving him as both able and willing to assist me, but he has written me two sheets of paper to prove he can not afford it. I am, therefore, obliged to sell everything I can of furniture, horses, &c., &c., to make out enough money to clear this debt by slow degrees. And my dear sister [Louisa], who is the most accurate calculator, says that if I live with my six children within my annuity of £500, I may in some years hope to clear it. But still you see my children are left destitute at my death and in the meantime can not be educated as they ought to be." At this crisis, George, who was feeling superior because he and several other officers in his mess had recently gone on a bread-and-water diet to clear up *their* debts, took occasion to lecture his mother. "I do not like borrowing at all," he wrote sententiously. "It is much better to sell Celbridge than to be obliged to any human being. My beautiful horse is gone to be sold for what he will fetch; the money will clear me of all debt. I can not exist while owing money." Sarah must have been pleased with his exemplary sentiments, and amused by her young fire-eater's pedantry and lack of humor. Life seemed so much simpler at his age.

Meanwhile her friends were pressing her to seek a pension. Why, they asked, should the widow and children of "a brave soldier, an upright servant of the public, and a truly amiable character in all the relations of life"—as the death notice in the *Annual Register* had described Colonel Napier—be compelled to suffer financial hardship? The argument was sound enough. It was then customary for widows in

Sarah's situation to seek pensions for themselves and their children. Indeed, the public regarded such pensions as a just award for the sacrifices imposed on the family of a public servant—a means, as it were, to avoid penalizing the heirs of true patriots.

Sarah agreed that she was very willing to seek one, but on the understanding that the pension should be given solely as a reward for Colonel Napier's services to his country. She flatly refused to write to the King herself, as Susan advised her to do, but admitted that it might be very serviceable to her cause to have some friend bring her petition privately to the attention of His Majesty when they knew for certain that the matter of her pension was under immediate discussion. And if he should be disposed to name a higher sum than was usually given, she would be doubly grateful.

Then, to advance her campaign, she established herself for the winter at 4 Sloane Terrace, London. The house was a mere "nut-shell," but sufficiently roomy to accommodate ten every day at dinner—for some twenty-five of her relatives were in town, and her days were filled with company "without what is called seeing anybody." The expense disturbed her, but fortunately her business, "The Memorial," was thriving. Her niece, Lady Bathurst, who acted as her ambassador, reported that Mr. Pitt had mentioned it to General Moore in the handsomest terms. General Sir John Moore had become a close friend since Charles and George had been sent to his regiment, which was camped near Dover. This was the famous Shorncliffe Camp which defeated Napoleon as surely as the more frequently publicized "playing fields of Eton." "If your ladyship had a dozen sons," Moore had written Sarah in August, "you could not do Colonel Mackenzie or me a greater kindness than by sending them to the 52nd."

Having launched her campaign, Sarah retired to Castle-town in the spring of 1805, and discovered to her great satisfaction that she was now in a position to pay off half her

debts, and that the remainder would be settled in a year or two with the rent from Celbridge. It was delightful to relax in the comfort and luxury of Louisa's household until the matter of her pension should be settled. Richard, who had been reading for holy orders with a Mr. Jones in England, was her only anxiety. The dear boy had been bickering with his tutor, and between them they had arrived at nothing but a hearty and mutual dislike. Sarah solved the problem by summoning Richard to Ireland.

Midsummer came and passed—and still no word of her pension. Sarah reminded herself that poor Mr. Pitt had on his mind other matters than her business, that to give him a little more time was but just. On July twenty-seventh she was still containing her soul in patience when she received word that her "Memorial" had been in question that very day. She immediately sat down and wrote Susan a scheme abounding in guile. "Do you think that if I—S. N.—wrote you—S. O'B.—a letter full of details of my situation with some remarks on the sympathetic feelings of one blind person for another"—George the Third was now totally blind—"and form the whole a little more formal than I should write to you, do you think you could with natural propriety send it to Lady Ilchester as an interesting letter to you, without a word more? Do you think she would talk of it before the King? If he takes it up well and good, if not there is no harm done that I should suppose. But then one never supposes right when one's interest is in question, so I make over the decision to your better judgment."

Susan must have been vastly amused when she read this. If the pension was to be claimed solely for the services of Colonel George Napier, why did his widow remind her royal lover that two were now blind who once thought to be happy in the sight of each other? Her proud and forthright Sarah was proving as astute in coming it over a King as had been

her great-grandmother, Louise de Querouaille! A Fox to her finger tips, with something of her Uncle Henry's skill in intrigue, Susan promptly approved Sarah's tentative letter, and suggested a more influential friend to present it at court—one, she said, who would willingly plead Lady Sarah Napier's cause before the Queen.

Outraged at this distasteful suggestion, Sarah haughtily reminded her too enthusiastic accomplice that she was not at liberty to obtain for her children through favor what they claimed as their just due for their father's merit. The Queen, indeed! She certainly did not mean to abate one jot of her proper pride in claiming her just reward! Susan would please mind her own business and refrain from further meddling. Sarah could afford to be high with Susan, for she had now gained the backing of a far more influential woman—the remarkable Lady Hester Stanhope who presided over the household of her uncle, the Prime Minister, the second Pitt. As Sarah was well aware, Lady Hester had become the dispenser of much patronage since Pitt had resumed the Government in 1804. Sarah had written her, stating her case. "But how is His Majesty to know these claims," she had asked, "if those whose business it is to examine into them and report them do not inform him?" And then, in conclusion, Sarah had tactfully intimated to Lady Hester that the person to blame for the delay in settling her claims was Lord Hawkesbury.

Sarah's cleverness in preparing the *piège* for the Secretary of State for the Home Department is revealed in Lady Hester's Memoirs. According to these, Mr. Pitt observed Lord Hawkesbury standing before Lady Hester one evening at a party, making a number of bows and scrapes, turning up his eyes, and cringing before her in such a fashion as to arouse his curiosity. When they got home, Mr. Pitt said: "Hester, if I am not too curious, what could Hawkesbury have to say

that animated him so much? What could he be making such fine speeches about? What could call forth such an exuberance of eloquence in him?"

"Oh, it was nothing," she answered; "he was telling me that all the power of the Treasury was at my service, that he would take care that Lady Sarah Napier's pension should be got through the different offices immediately, that he had nothing so much at heart as to execute my orders, that he would see that all that was necessary should be done according to my wishes, and so on. But, as I despise the man, I only laughed at him and turned my back on him—for *I* drink at the fountainhead!"

"Now this is really too good a thing!" exclaimed Mr. Pitt, lifting up his hands in astonishment. "It was but this very day, at three o'clock, that he was urging me not to let this very pension be given, or at least to prolong the business for a year, if it were possible, till, by tiring her patience, the thing might be dropped, or something turn up to set it aside, adding that it would be opening the door to abuses, if I granted this too readily."

"Oh, indeed!" Lady Hester exploded, and then turned to her uncle with: "Quick. Let me show him whom he has to deal with. Do give your orders that the thing may be done immediately."

"Yes, but it's too late tonight," Mr. Pitt replied.

"No, it isn't. I see a light in the Treasury," she insisted, and she rang and sent for an official. When he came she said to him, "Will you be so good, sir, the first thing in the morning, to see that all the signatures are put to Lady Sarah Napier's paper. There is Mr. Pitt; ask him if it is so or not." Mr. Pitt, of course, assented, and there the matter ended. A happier era had begun for Lady Sarah Napier.

The good news had reached her before December, for she wrote Susan on the second: "I do not wait for official information to tell you that the pensions are done. I believe it



is called £1000, but I don't know the ostensible sum only the net sum, which is of more importance. It is £300 to me, and £500 among my four girls, £800 in all—and most handsomely done in your friend, Mr. Pitt, not to speak of the King & Co., for I assure you I have had a most active and good natured friend in Lady Hester Stanhope and others.”

The manner in which Sarah obtained her pension would be considered jobbery today, but there was justification. She believed that her children deserved a good education from the country their father had served so faithfully. In return, she taught her boys to earn their way by merit, and to steer clear from the damning influence of favoritism and place. In fact, she had been giving her sons to her country with one hand, at the very moment when with the other hand she was pulling wires to obtain a pension for herself and her daughters.

Ever scrupulous in money matters, Sarah did not quit Ireland until she had all her debts in regular paying order and the money funded for it. In April, 1806, she was back in London with her daughters, settled in a pleasant, airy house at 24 Hans Place. Even the younger boys had left home now, Richard was at Oriel College, Oxford, and Henry had gone to sea. Charles, William, and George visited her when on leave, and their company was the more highly prized because she foresaw that all three might be sent abroad on active duty before long. Sarah had little inclination now to go beyond her vast circle of intimate connections, but her failing eyes saw enough to report that society was pursuing pleasure with the same passionate frenzy that she had known in her youth. Change and decay had long been assailing her own generation; Lord George Lennox's St. Vitus dance had ended ill; Mr. Conolly was gone; and, before the year was up, she had lost her brother Richmond and Charles James Fox.

Sarah's affection for and faith in her nephew had grown with the years. "Let Fox be as full of faults as you please," she had written Susan on June first, "and I grant he has plenty,

still it was the hand of Providence that placed him at the helm of a sinking state, and he is trying to save it without the least shadow of interested motives, but full of earnest desire to be of use." Sarah, whose own vigor had always made her too optimistic about the illnesses of her loved ones, had chosen to believe that the stories of Fox's illness were all fabricated. Did he not carry on his political duties? He did—in a state of exhaustion; and in August dropsy had set in. The physicians had recommended country air, and Sarah had taken the bulletins from Chiswick over-cheerfully. It must be so trying for dear Charles, she had lamented, to be lying idle at a time when everything in the political world was tending to the very end for which he had striven so long. A few weeks later, her nephew, friend, and lifelong intimate sank into death with extraordinary sweetness and patience. He assured his wife that he died happy, but pitied her because she was compelled to go on living. When Sarah heard the details she was terribly concerned for Mrs. Fox and the others who had nursed Charles so devotedly during his last illness.

Winter brought a wide field for her own anxious thoughts to stray in. Charles was awaiting orders to sail for the Cape of Good Hope; George had been appointed aide-de-camp to Sir John Moore, second in command of the British expeditionary force in Sicily; William was recruiting in Ireland; and Henry was at St. Helens on the *Spencer*, a seventy-four commanded by Captain Spofford, and preparing to sail for a three-year station in America. Even Louisa Napier was away visiting her friend, Lady Mark Kerr. But the chief object of her anxiety was at home by her side.

For about a year, poor little Cecilia had had "more the appearance of a skeleton than anything else." The doctors said she had outgrown her strength, and Sarah, guided by their advice, had taken her to the coast for the tepid baths and sea air, the very treatments that had probably killed Louisa Bunbury at the same age. Fate was repeating itself

with singular cruelty, for the pathetic little thing had become closer to her mother, during these last months of increasing blindness, than even Louisa Bunbury had been.

Sarah was almost totally blind now, and in March she wrote Susan to take leave of their long, long correspondence. Henceforth she would have to communicate through the aid of an intermediary. Sarah explained that her doctor was promising to rid her of "a most charming cataract" after she became entirely blind, but she had little confidence that the operation would benefit her. "Nor do I much dwell on the charms of my cataract," she added wryly, "tho' it is just like the King's."

## XIX

### *... of Heroes*

**D**URING THE spring and summer of 1808, England became increasingly active in the conflict against Napoleon's Continental System. Junot at the head of the French Army had already occupied Portugal in 1807, after the flight of the royal family of Braganza to South America. Napoleon had then invaded Spain and left Murat to represent him in Madrid. Early in 1808, Napoleon compelled Charles the Fourth to abdicate, and elevated his brother Jerome to the Spanish throne. The Spaniards immediately rose in revolt; the Portuguese followed suit; and Junot was cut off from the main French army. The French expeditions had been unsuccessful in quelling the revolts in the Spanish provinces, and in June, Great Britain, seizing the opportunity for intervention, had answered the Spanish cry for help by promising to dispatch an army at once.

The news that the Government was about to launch a campaign in the Iberian Peninsula inflamed the imaginations of Charles and William Napier, neither of whom had as yet experienced duty overseas. George Napier had been luckier; he had served in Sicily as Sir John Moore's aide-de-camp and was now returning to Portsmouth for a three-month stay before he accompanied his chief on a mission to interview Gustavus Adolphus in Sweden. George worshiped General Moore and he burned to prove his devotion by deeds of

valor. Charles also had served under Moore in England in the 52nd Regiment, and was now cursing the fate that had removed him from his old mess, for since the outbreak of the Spanish War it seemed certain that both the commander whom he adored and his former regiment would, sooner or later, take part in the Peninsular campaign.

What was Charles's disgust, then, to discover, by the time the Government's plans became known, that he had orders to sail for Capetown! His unfortunate mother, already much distraught by Cecilia's illness and her own blindness, was confronted with the realization that she was the innocent cause of his disappointment. For Sarah had badgered the late Charles Fox to obtain a Majority in a Cape Colonial Corps for her eldest son, and to her great delight she had secured the promotion for him. Charles had been trying ever since, without success, to exchange from his regiment to one which would again place him under Sir John Moore. And now here he was in Portsmouth cooling his heels until a favorable wind should arise to carry him as far as possible from the place where he most wanted to be. Then a remarkable incident gave a new turn to his fortunes. In Portsmouth he was thrown into the society of the 50th Regiment, and "he so won on the officers that they proposed to him an exchange at small cost." He refused to pay money, as contrary to the regulations, but they would not be so baffled, and contrived to have him gazetted without payment. How this came about he never knew, according to his brother William, who adds, "but it was a signal proof of regard." Bognor was, for a time, the quarters of the 50th, and in May he accompanied the regiment to Guernsey, whence he wrote his mother long letters teeming with restlessness. And in Guernsey he became a Freemason—an act which afterward saved his life.

Meanwhile, William, who was with the 43rd Regiment, wrote his mother a fretful letter from Colchester. He was fuming because he was afraid that his regiment might not

embark, since they had been countermanded for some time to belong to Lord Chatham's division, "or some other man who delights in having handsome showy guards for himself, and to take the credit of making the regiment to himself, and consequently asks for all the promotion that ought to go in it for his friends." William insisted he had a right to be indignant since his had for five years been considered the best regiment in England, yet the reward was to put everybody over the heads of their officers, "by which you will perceive, my dear Mother, that the worst regiment I could possibly have got into is the 43d, and that I can never have any chance of promotion or real service in it."

Sarah's heart was too heavy to heed her son's impatience, for Cecilia was now in the last stages of consumption. She died in August, and William hurried home. Richard Napier reported, however, that his mother had not suffered "from the shock, nor from that of suddenly seeing one of my brothers [William] when she least expected, both of which occasion renewals of grief that I always wish soon over . . . She has fixed herself in my dear Cecilia's room, which affords a melancholy pleasure that it would be cruel to deprive her of."

But morbid brooding never occupied Sarah long, and fate did not permit her to remain absorbed in her grief. In October, both Charles and William had managed by hook or by crook to get to the Peninsula. Sir Arthur Wellesley (afterward Duke of Wellington), had defeated the French at Rolica and beat back Junot himself at Vineiro. But Sir Hugh Dalrymple, the commander-in-chief, negotiated the highly unpopular convention of Cintra, by which Junot, in return for surrendering Lisbon, was permitted to transport his troops back to France at British expense. The move was loudly criticized in England, and Dalrymple was about to be replaced by Sir John Moore—which meant that George, too, would soon be in Spain. William was stationed at Corunna, whence he wrote his mother assuring her that the French would

never eat him; he was much too tough for such epicures. And Charles, much to his delight, had not only been ordered to Lisbon but had received the command of his regiment when his colonel retired. So that all three of Sarah's soldier sons were about to enter active service in one of the crucial centers of the Napoleonic struggle.

William, as usual, did his best to alleviate her anxiety and distract her from her grief. He wrote about attending the play, waltzing with the Spanish ladies at balls, and learning the language from these obliging governesses. He begged his mother to get him some letters from Lord Holland to introduce him to further good company on the three-hundred-mile march toward the enemy. "The men," he wrote, "are poor frippery little apprentice-looking people, but the women have all beautiful black eyes and generally very good figures." The Spaniards were not so jealous as reputed; they only drew their stilettos when they were ill-used, and of the two officers who had been stabbed to date, both had recovered. "The peasants who are training here are extremely well drilled to the use of the firelock, and if they have the courage to fight they are as good troops as our militia—that is in discipline, for they are of a very inferior race of men to the English in point of personal appearance, except the carmen, who are the strongest looking men I ever saw."

William's charming letter inspired the blind mother at home to take advantage of a most delightful invention of Richard's which enabled her to write him in return with her own hand upon "carbonic paper." "I have by this date [November fourteenth] written to your brothers each a carbonic, to congratulate them on being as happy as sensible human beings can be, whose ardent wishes to distinguish themselves are on the hot anvil under the piercing eye of a general they love and admire. An aide-de-camp on service, and the command of the 50th in a long march, are no joke, and if not executed in a superior manner the Napier heart will not be

satisfied with itself. I leave you, who so well know what ought to be the feelings of the widow of such a person as your father—to you, I say, I leave it to form a judgment of mine at a crisis so important as will probably be the close of this year. I hourly expect news from Spain, for we have as yet nothing of later date than yours.” In concluding, she begged like a child for a report on the legibility of her script, and warned William to be on the alert lest he find himself with a fight of his own on his hands before his column joined that of General Moore. Clearly, she had regained her vitality and her contact with the world, and had plenty of spirit now to encourage her sons.

William, still haunted perhaps by the memory of her recent desolation, was determined to emphasize only the lighter aspects of war. After a very fatiguing march of one hundred and twenty miles in the pouring rain, he took advantage of an express to write her about the romantic scenery in the mountains of Galicia, and describe the parties he had attended on the march between Lugo and Villafranca. The girls in Lugo had taught him the language so fast that he and his friend, Lloyd, were always able to obtain letters to other girls in the next stopping place along the line. “The only way I can repay them is to give them some tooth brushes and powder, as they complain they have no method of cleaning their teeth, to their sorrow. Whenever you have an opportunity,” he begged, “pray send me a large assortment of the above articles.”

In more serious vein, he said that he liked the Spanish upper classes, although the men were proud and dirty, but that the lower classes impressed him as being cruel, cheating, and crafty. He longed to exterminate them for their treatment of animals, and to flog their lazy carcasses. William liked his allies less and less on closer acquaintance; the truth was that they were up to every kind of villainy. The only thing in their favor was their inclination to throw off the priesthood. He



and his brother officers had visited many convents and monasteries. They had found the nuns old, ugly, and loquacious to a degree, and the monks good-natured, dirty, and, taken all in all, the fattest people in Spain. The Bishops were downright impudent, refusing to allow British officers into their houses when regularly billeted—"for which the Spanish officers who accompany us call them damned cooks and wigmakers to their faces!"

Sarah must have listened to every word of William's long letter with passionate interest, and then begged young Caroline to read it again and again. But how, she wondered, was the campaign progressing? William had told her nothing specific, but no one would hear the story until the despatch boats arrived. And presently they arrived with tragic news. Sir John Moore wittingly took a big chance when he made the raid into Spain to disconcert Napoleon. He spoke of advancing "bridle in hand," ready to turn and run—and run he did.

Betrayed by incapable Ministers and a fumbling staff, frustrated by the vacillations of Sir David Baird, who was to have supported him, and harassed by the superior forces of Marshal Soult—and, of course, let down by his Spanish allies who were incapable of performing any promises—Moore fell back to Corunna. There, on January sixteenth, 1809, to cover the embarkation of his supplies, he placed himself in front of the 42nd Highlanders and gave the order to advance on the enemy. In the repulse of the French forces which followed, George Napier bore an honorable part, and he got his taste, too, of the incoherent horror of battle. He saw the chief he revered as a father carried from the field mortally wounded; he saw the bleeding, lifeless body of his friend, Charles Stanhope; and he heard from the lips of the 50th's senior Captain the crowning disaster: "Sir, our commanding officer, Major Napier, is killed."

Could it be that Charles, whom only a few hours since he

had seen at the head of the 50th charging the enemy with his usual heedless gallantry, Charles the victor of so many boyish encounters, the center of so much life and light, was dead? George could not believe it. When dark came down, he returned to the battlefield, and, torch in hand, searched for hours among the ghastly relics of victory for his brother's body, in which, perhaps some faint breath might still remain. He ransacked the dressing stations and the hospital. "In vain," he said later in his Memoirs. "No dear brother was to be found; and no one could give me any other tidings but that they saw him killed."

Sick with anguish and with the thought of his mother's anguish yet to be, he went on board the *Audacious* and sailed for home. He learned that William, whose death was also rumored, had embarked safely at Vigo without seeing action at all; at least he might offer his mother the comforting news that her third son would presently be with her. Sarah cried a good deal when he told her about Charles, but her reaction to the shock was altogether amazing. She simply refused to believe that Charles was dead. She grasped at every particular that left room for doubt; why, she asked, if he had been wounded, had his body never been found? With these crumbs of comfort she attempted to keep alive the spirits of George, who had now recovered sufficiently from the numbing shock of that dreadful day to feel even more intensely the double loss of his brother and his chief. William, too, was making himself ill over the unlucky fate that had sent him to Vigo and compelled him to return "without having an opportunity either of dying like my darling Charles, or of contributing to revenge his and Moore's death." But while the boys bemoaned the loss of their best friend and their brother, Sarah continued to hope even when all hope was gone.

Weeks passed without a word, and then, in March, reports reached the family that indicated that her view might be confirmed. George, William, and the girls looked at one another

with a wild surmise, and decided firmly that they would not breathe a word to their mother until they knew for certain. Lord Mulgrave, the First Lord of the Admiralty, kindly offered to send a sloop-of-war under a flag of truce to Corunna in order to conduct the necessary inquiries. A fortnight later, when they were hourly expecting word, Sarah—to the consternation of Louisa Napier—got wind of what was going on. The possibility that her happy suspicions might yet be confirmed threw her into a fever of impatience, but she contrived to await the outcome with her customary fortitude.

She had not long to wait. When the ship arrived in Corunna, the officers found Charles Napier recovered from his four wounds, and Marshal Ney, at the risk of Napoleon's displeasure, gave him leave to go home on his parole not to serve against the French until he should be regularly exchanged. Shortly afterwards, Sarah received a scrap of paper on which were the words, "Hudibras, you lie! You lie! for I have been in battle slain, and I live to fight again!"

Charles added that since he was still weak from his wounds he would rest for a few days at the house of one Mrs. Brown, about a mile out of Exeter on the London road. He failed to mention that Mrs. Brown was sheltering Mrs. Kelly, the deserted wife of a paymaster, who even at the moment of his arrival was in deep mourning for him. Charles never exposed this "platonic attachment" to the scrutiny of his brothers and sisters, but Mrs. Brown's nephew, the Reverend Edward Coleridge, has described his arrival in terms that leave little doubt as to their relationship: "As we were playing near the gate came in a shabbily dressed and sickly looking man, and stopping asked us whether Mrs. Brown lived there, and whether Mrs. Kelly was staying there." The children bounded into the house and announced to Mrs. Kelly that there was a fellow at the door called Major Napier. Much to their astonishment, the lady collapsed in a dead faint. But their aunt bade them show the gentleman in, "and in he came, looking

as like the 'Old Sodger' as could be." Mrs. Brown was all kindness, Mrs. Kelly recovered her legs, and the boys, entranced by Major Napier's tales and fun, rapidly became his shadows.

But of all this Sarah and the Napiers knew nothing, and when George, Louisa, and Emily went down to meet him, they found him in Exeter. They spied him on top of the coach in his old red coat, out at elbows and covered with dust. He was pale, and his beard and whiskers were black as coal. "In short," George Napier wrote, "he looked like an old Chelsea pensioner."

No mother, as George proclaimed in his Memoirs, was "more devotedly attached to her sons" than Sarah, and her happiness on Charles's safe return was the more intense for the fortitude with which she had borne the long suspense. One pictures the blind woman seated in the midst of her reunited family, seeking to participate, through countless retellings, in the ordeal of her sons, and filling in the details of a picture that had come so perilously near to sheer blackness. If Charles was disposed to relive these experiences, he had certainly a great deal to say. Undoubtedly, he told then what he was later to set down on paper: How Elvina had been thrice won and thrice lost, how he had fought his way through murderous fire, how he had encountered death in the narrow lanes of the Spanish town, and most incredible of all, how he had escaped slaughter because he was a Freemason. Stabbed in the back, Charles had fallen. As he lay helpless on the ground, he made a fraternal sign. The next moment he saw a florid, handsome, young French drummer holding the arm of a dark Italian, who was in the act of repeating the blow.

William and George, too, had much to tell of Corunna and of Sir John Moore. As she listened to the boys' stories and heard them again from other lips, Sarah must have said to herself that she was adding another chapter to a chronicle al-

ready crowded; she had become a grand old lady, the mother of heroes. Wherever she went she was treated with a new kind of deference. The Honorable Mrs. Calvert, the Irish beauty, who was presented to her by Louisa Conolly at one of the Duchess of Leinster's receptions, was so overcome with awe that she could only return the pressure of Sarah's hand and falter out her congratulations on Charles's safe return. "Imagine," she wrote in her Journal, "the transports of the poor blind mother."

But Sarah was not long permitted to enjoy the company of her three soldier sons. Sir Arthur Wellesley had landed at Lisbon and was about to launch the second Peninsular campaign. George and William left England with their regiments in May, 1809, arriving on the Peninsula just too late to take part in the victory of Talavera, which was to gain for Sir Arthur the title of Viscount Wellington. The reports in London, however, were not all favorable. Wellington had to retreat; the troops suffered from sickness and short rations through the neglect of the commissaries. Remembering how Sir John Moore had worked night and day to supply the needs of his troops, Sarah was filled with contempt for "a Commander-in-Chief who publicly keeps a mistress at headquarters, does not give all the attention to the care of his army, and disgusts his army, who lose all confidence in him." Sarah was a Whig, and Sir John Moore had been a Whig. Whigs thought Tories were fools, even when they were not. Her opinion of Wellington, however, was soon to be reversed.

In December, Charles was at last exchanged, and left to join his regiment, which was returning from Walcheren; and Richard shut himself up at Oxford to avoid the temptations of London. Bereft of their company, Sarah felt that she still had much to be thankful for, since her two dear girls were at her side. Both were devoted to her and eager to serve her, but to Caroline she entrusted her most intimate thoughts, and her she preferred as a reader and amanuensis. Louisa Napier

was too quick, too much occupied with her own interests to act as her stepmother's secretary. Possibly the blind mother unconsciously imposed too much confinement and responsibility on her willing little daughter, for in May, 1810, Caroline fell ill of an inflammation of the lungs. A few weeks later, Sarah, who should have recognized the danger of tuberculosis after losing three of her family from the same disease, was quite confident that the malady had subsided. The inevitable relapse occurred, but at the end of June, Sarah reported that there was no immediate cause for alarm. Richard added a postscript to inform Lady Susan that his mother had been deceived a little by the doctor, but "more so by herself." The truth was that Caroline was dying; when he wrote again on September twelfth she was dead. Fortunately, his mother was calm and her health unaffected. It had comforted her somewhat to hear from her sons in Portugal that they were well, and to receive from Harry a greeting posted in Madras in July.

Reassurance from the Peninsula, however, was always a commodity subject to fluctuation, and even British victory was never an unalloyed pleasure to anxious relatives in England. Soon after the news of Wellington's victory over the French at Busaco, Sarah received a communication from the Commander-in-Chief himself. He regretted the distressing intelligence which he had to convey, but was confident that she would receive it in a manner becoming to her. "The Army," Wellington continued, "was engaged with the enemy on the 27th, and your sons Charles and George were wounded. I saw the former after he was wounded, and he was well and in good spirits, although he had a severe but not a dangerous wound in the jaw. George is wounded in the hip, but very slightly, and both are doing well. You will see the account of the action in which the troops were engaged, and I hope it will be some consolation to you to reflect that

your sons received their wounds on an occasion in which the British troops behaved so well."

The dark angel had cast his shadow over the whole Napier family on that day. Just before the three brothers had gone into battle, their cousin, Lord March, had told them that Caroline was dead. They had received the news in silence, embraced one another, and gone to their posts. William had gone into action with a still open wound on his hip; George was wounded while he was gallantly leading a charge; and as for Charles, even when his jaw had been shot through, only the earnest protests of his friend Pakenham had been able to keep him on his pallet in the convent of Busaco.

Meanwhile, Sarah herself was facing a painful ordeal with equal courage. She submitted, largely to please her children, to a painful operation on her right eye; her doctor hoped to save her left eye which was diseased only by sympathy with the already irrecoverable right. She had nothing to lose, as she cheerfully pointed out; she could not suffer worse than her present blindness. So that if Sarah's boys had the stuff of which heroes are made, they were not slow to realize the source of their merit. "Such as your children are," Charles wrote her, "they are *your* work." And George's tribute was warmer still: "You feel rejoiced that people of acknowledged merit take notice of your sons, and you attribute it to their own merit. You, yourself are the original cause of that friendship. Many officers are as brave and have more talents than us without meeting with the same attention . . . and as most of our friends know you, and the firmness with which you support your misfortunes, they naturally expect that your sons have derived from you the same spring of mind, and the shame of doing anything inferior in constancy of mind or courage to yourself, and as naturally wish to attach us to their persons or fortunes."

After Caroline's death, Sarah, unable to endure the emptiness of her own house, took refuge in Castletown, "which, being a deserted palace would fill me with gloom could I see those places where the happiest years of my life were spent in a neglected state." Mr. Conolly was long since dead, but her dear Louisa, who always united prudence with energy, maintained everything comfortably. Amid the company there, Sarah found she could still contrive to pass the day as did other people, and conquer her wandering thoughts. Her nephew, the Fourth Duke of Richmond, was the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and when they visited him in the vice-regal lodge in Dublin, Lady Sarah was permitted "to wear the individual cap and gown" she wore at Castletown. Knowing that she was regarded as a privileged person, it amused her to think that strangers might ask, "How can the Duke have that queer old blind woman in the corner?" She sunned herself in the affection of her nephew and his Duchess, and in the company of their delightful daughters, who vied with each other in attending her. When anxiety for her sons crept over her, she reminded herself sternly that she could not "be a mother when glory is in question, or rather I hope I am what a mother should be . . . particularly as Charles writes me a whole page to prove the folly of people thinking a battle is dangerous when so many escape." Yet she had moments when she dreaded that her mind might be giving way under the double strain of blindness and anxiety.

William, to whom she confided her morbid fears, replied: "You may rest assured, my dear Mother, that you have an energy of mind that few can boast of, and it has its consequent good effects. The sentiments that caused you to undergo the pain of that dreadful operation on your eye are the original causes that also give to Charles his intrepidity and his ambition of honorable fame, to George his impetuosity and supreme contempt for everything that is not noble and belonging to the character of a soldier." It was



always William who had to make these discriminations and who could best quiet his mother's fears. He was better able to appreciate such fears, for his was not the heedless heroism of his brothers but rather the quiet fortitude of a man who performs without complaint a distasteful duty. "We are but licensed murderers," he declared; "the nature of war is misery. Thus I am condemned to a profession I dislike by religion, honor, and necessity." But he consoled himself with the reflection that in serving his country abroad he was protecting his home from future bloodshed and misery.

Whatever his convictions he acquitted himself well, for, on the sixteenth of March, Lord Wellington wrote again to Lady Sarah Napier, regretfully informing her that two of her sons had again been wounded in action, neither of them, he hoped, seriously. "William is wounded in the back, and this is supposed to be only a flesh wound; George in the right arm, which is broken. Both are doing well, and will I hope soon recover and return to their duty. Your ladyship has so often received accounts of the same description with that which I am now writing to you, and your feelings on the subject are so just and proper, that it is needless to trouble you further. Your sons are brave fellows and an honor to the army; and I hope that God will preserve them to you and their country."

William's wound was not so slight as the Commander-in-Chief reported; a bullet had lodged near his backbone, and as it was never removed it continued to cause him discomfort. Henry, too, came home to be restored from the effects of four bouts of fever contracted in India, and Sarah returned to England to nurse her sons. The London house seemed less terrible to her than she had believed possible since Caroline's death, for besides the two invalids her sisters were in town—"my Sister Leinster in wonderful health for eighty"—and her daughter Emily, and Louisa Napier and Richard. The soldier and sailor had such spirits "that it makes them go through all the plagues of war in the most surprising way. . . . They are

like children, the instant the ague stops or the bile goes off they forget they have suffered." The burden of maternal anxiety was lessened momentarily in other ways, too; George was now quite well and at his duty, and Charles—no doubt to his very great disgust—was quartered in Guernsey again as Lieutenant Colonel of the 102nd Regiment. With only one son on the Peninsula that winter, Sarah was determined to be as thankful as possible.

She went about occasionally. Mrs. Amelia Opie, the copious novelist, tells of seeing at a party a venerable blind woman, whom someone pointed out to her as the once celebrated beauty, Lady Sarah Lennox. "She is now grey, blind, and seems both by her voice and manner to be bowed by various cares, but I perhaps fancied this," Mrs. Opie recorded, and then burst into a eulogy on William's good looks. "By Lady Sarah was one of her sons . . . I never saw a handsomer man! I could not help looking at him. He is very black, with black moustachios, that make him look like a picture of some Venetian by Titian, and his manner was so pleasing. He had his mother's outline enlarged into manly beauty, and he has such fine dark eyes." So that even as Sarah began to lose the physical charm which had long brought the world to her feet, she shone by a reflected glory.

But George was still in the thick of the fight, and with the increasing of Napoleon's difficulties throughout Europe, Wellington's campaign was beginning to take on a more aggressive and dangerous aspect. Early in the new year, Wellington attacked and captured Ciudad Rodrigo, and within a few days Sarah received a letter from him, dated Callegos, twentieth January, 1812.

"My dear Madame: I am sorry to tell you that your son George was again wounded in the right arm so badly last night in the storm of Ciudad Rodrigo, that it was necessary to amputate it above the elbow. He, however, bore the oper-

ation remarkably well, and I have seen him this morning, quite well, free from pain and fever, and enjoying highly his success before he received his wound. When he did receive it, he only desired I might be informed that he had led his men to the top of the breach before he had fallen.

"Having such sons, I am aware you expect to hear of those misfortunes which I have more than once had to communicate to you; and notwithstanding your affection for them, you have so just a notion of the value of the distinction they are daily acquiring for themselves by their gallantry and good conduct, that their misfortunes do not make so great an impression upon you.

"Under such circumstances I perform the task which I have taken on myself with less reluctance, hoping at the same time that this will be the last occasion on which I shall have to address you on such a subject, and that your brave sons will be spared to you. Although the last was the most serious, it was not the only wound which George received during the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo; he was hit by the splinter of a shell in the shoulder on the 16th.

"I have the honor to remain, &c.,

Wellington."

When one reflects that the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army was in the midst of a highly aggressive campaign, the fact that he took the time to express his concern for George Napier—as he had repeatedly done for all three Napiers—shows how valuable George, Charles, and William had been to him.

But when the family read her Wellington's letter, Sarah was filled with horror. Was George, she wondered, in danger of infection? Her greatnephew, Lord March, did his best to reassure her. George, he wrote, was in the best of spirits and about to be removed from the hospital to his house at headquarters in Gallegos, and he inclosed a surgeon's report to the

effect that the danger of infection had passed. Gradually Sarah reconciled herself to the amputation, and the family assured her that George himself would find great consolation in the glory he had acquired by leading three hundred volunteers to the top of the breach. George substantiated their view by writing that a few days had restored his strength, "but what most contributed to my recovery was a visit from Lord Wellington, who brought me the British newspapers." The Commander-in-Chief had emphasized his approval of George's conduct by informing him that he had been recommended not only for the medal which would be struck on the occasion but also for the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The honor done him, George declared, had rendered him almost insensible to pain. All in all, Wellington was a worthy successor to Sir John Moore.

Best news of all, however, was that his battalion had been ordered to England. For however much she might long to hear of her sons' exploits in Spain and of the honors done them, Sarah must, with the increasing burdens of blindness and old age, have been happy that one son at least was home from the wars—home with his shield and not on it.

## XX

### *The Past Recaptured*

BUT IF the late afternoon of Sarah's life had been dark and tempestuous, the evening was to close in mellow radiance. The endless cycle of maternal anxiety—wounds, convalescence, danger, and more wounds—was broken in March, 1812 when William married Caroline Amelia, second daughter of General Henry Edward Fox, third son of the First Lord Holland. The marriage of her son and greatniece made Sarah happier than she had thought she could ever be again, for it reconfirmed the lifelong intimacy between herself and the Fox family. In taking Caroline to her heart, Sarah declared, "I shall only lengthen out the early affection that subsisted so uninterruptedly between her father and me." Then, in June, Charles Napier was ordered to Bermuda with the 102nd. To be cut off from the great events convulsing Europe, to be restricted to an island scarcely larger than a prison just as the war against Bonaparte was entering its final triumphant stages, this was indeed chafing to Charles's fiery spirit. But to Sarah his confinement in a remote outpost brought only relief, and the fact that Henry's ship frequently docked at Bermuda was an added source of comfort. To complete the circle of her felicity, George, on returning from the Peninsula after the loss of his arm, had become engaged to the beautiful Margaret Craig, sister of a fellow officer who had been killed in the war. They had met while George was

visiting the bereaved parents in Scotland, and had fallen in love at first sight. They were married in October. The bride was said to be as lovely and charming in mind as she was in person. And although Sarah said frankly that she could not pretend that Margaret was by any means the equal of Caroline, she was well satisfied with her new daughter-in-law.

Margaret was more enthusiastic. "I can not tell you," she wrote her parents, "how delighted I am with Lady Sarah, and how very kind she is to me." Attempting to analyze her mother-in-law's charm, Margaret continued: "In her whole manner to her family there is a tenderness and indulgence I have never seen before; so very mild, and when she finds fault or any little thing happens she cannot approve of, her opinion is given in a manner quite her own. Then her approbation is so warm, and the smallest thing done right and well timed gives her so much pleasure. I perfectly see how her approbation should be felt by her sons as their greatest reward. She seems very cheerful and perfectly happy and draws everyone around her. In short, there is something about her that seems to soften and improve everyone within reach of the influence of her manners." The more Margaret studied her mother-in-law, the more anxious she became to emulate her. At last, she actually asked Lady Sarah to tell her how she had created the place she held with all her sons, and Margaret conscientiously recorded all that she gathered. The resulting piece is so stilted, so utterly lacking in Sarah's headlong spontaneity, that Margaret obviously tinkered with her mother-in-law's words, though the ideas themselves are certainly Sarah's. Her children, she told Margaret, had learned to love her and confide in her, largely because they were everywhere confronted with the signs of their father's affection and trust in her. Neither she nor Colonel Napier had ever spoiled their children; nor had they ever gone out of their way to play the martinets; above all, the perfect congruity of their feelings had made it impossible that the boys

should ever play one parent off against the other. "As they rose out of infancy," she said, "I left them to their father's management, and studied to become the friend, not the tutoress of my sons." So in later years, when the boys were left to her sole guidance at an age "little able to conduct themselves, little disposed to be guided," she enjoyed their full confidence. She had only to recall to their minds the sentiments of the good Colonel, and without the least pressure from her they would steer their courses rightly. The advice is sound, certainly, but Margaret may have wondered how one arrived first at the *sine qua non* of perfect marital harmony.

Other chapters of the past, too, had still the power to touch the old, blind woman. But of Charles Bunbury and Gordon and Lauzun she said nothing. Sir Charles had dropped the gaiety and languid dissipation of his youth; he had become morose and unsocial in his temper, almost penurious, they said, in his habits. His taste for learning and beauty had declined with age; he had long since ceased to attend the Literary Club, where in his youth he had enjoyed the society of Dr. Johnson; and he who had once been the husband of one of the loveliest women in England comforted himself finally with a wife of low birth and little education. He died in 1821, remembered by a few turfites as the first owner to win both the Derby and the Oaks in the same year, 1801. If Sarah gave his spirit a speeding thought it was one of gratitude, perhaps, for the friendly gesture he had made after the divorce.

Lord William Gordon had departed this life after a middle age of unruffled mediocrity. The only person in Sarah's intimate circle to share her secrets on that score was Mrs. Elizabeth Armistead Fox, dear Charles James' widow, and the one time mistress of the Duke of Dorset. Mrs. Fox had also enjoyed a bar-sinister honeymoon at Knole, the great palace of the gay, bad Duke, which Lord William Gordon had borrowed for himself and Sarah after their first elope-

ment. In an exchange of such reminiscences Mrs. Fox would have excelled; but Sarah could perhaps have run her close if the discussion had been limited to the period between Lauzun and Lord William Gordon. These tea drinkings and tongue waggings of the two venerable ladies are of interest only for what they might have mentioned. For it is unlikely that either spoke of her experiences at Knole.

As for Lauzun, he was to emerge again, to trouble for a moment the placid waters of Sarah's last days. A short time before her death his Memoirs were published, and everyone in fashionable society tittered over the audacious confessions, in which, of course, Sarah was heavily involved. Elderly ladies who had once been attractive and indiscreet boiled with indignation and cried that the work was a forgery. And though the cynics found nothing too improbable in the book, the more chivalrous were repelled by its audacious candor. Sarah's relatives—especially the snobbish Susan—must have blushed for her once more, but the Napier boys completely ignored the whole matter. For them Sarah was the perfect mother, and any such stories were, naturally, rank fabrications. It is hardly probable that Sarah, blind and increasingly infirm, was tortured by any knowledge of the publication. But if she did hear about it, she may have smiled a fleeting, reminiscent smile. She could scarcely be angry with her *petit Lauzun*. He had always shown this extravagance—had he not paid her the compliment of fainting dead away in despair of her love? Had he not lifted her for a moment from the morass of a futile marriage and made her realize the heady vintage of her fascination? By now she was well beyond the reach of calumny; she had found her happiness along quite other paths. How had she once phrased it for Susan? (It was so difficult now to conquer her wandering thoughts.) Yes, now she had it: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit except adherence to what is right, and as family affections are virtues so they meet with their reward in old age."



To one figure from the distant past, however, Sarah's thoughts returned with ever-increasing frequency. "My heart feels the sincerest emotion of pity for him whenever the sad face of woe is pictured to my mind," she confessed, "and I can't forget that the family of my sovereign, whose regard for me has been great, should be the most unhappy family in all his dominion." Had the future of George the Third—his blindness, his growing insanity—been pictured to her fifty years earlier, how little she would have credited the prophecy! Now, the knowledge of their mutual infirmity brought her closer to him.

In the spring of 1814, Mr. George Tierney, the Whig leader, witnessed the signs of her sympathy in St. James Church, where the Dean of Canterbury was preaching a charity sermon for the benefit of an Infirmary for Diseases of the Eye. The infirmary, the Dean said, had been sanctioned and supported by His Majesty, and he reminded the congregation that in addition to all his other misfortunes the King was now totally and incurably blind. At this point in the sermon, Mr. Tierney noticed an elderly lady in front of him who appeared to be deeply affected. "She wept much, and as she evidently took a more than ordinary interest in all that she heard, she attracted my notice in no slight degree, and the more so when, the service being concluded, I observed that she herself was quite helpless from the entire loss of sight, and was obliged to be led out of church." Only later was he to learn that the tears he had seen shed in commiseration for the King had fallen from the eyes of the very woman whom His Majesty had once wanted to make his Queen.

But recollections of the King were not all shrouded in gloom. Sarah discussed the old days once more with Susan at one of their periodic reunions in February, 1818. Susan, it seems, had dined with the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, and the Duke had talked constantly of his brother the King's youthful admiration for Lady Sarah and the confidences he

had made to Susan. The Duke had heard of the King's words; could Lady Susan remember exactly what had occurred in St. James Palace? Susan had sighed that it was difficult to remember the disconnected remarks, the jokes, the hints, of long ago, and the matter had finally dropped. Sarah may have been tempted to murmur that she could have set the Duke of Gloucester right with a verbatim report. But both the old ladies probably had the sense to realize that time and sentimentality had distorted the truth, and that it was useless to worry over old stories. "I showed him your picture," Lady Susan added, by way of comfort, "and both he and the Duchess said that it was beautiful."

Since the peace in 1815, Sarah had been easier for having her sons in England. George was at Twickenham with his wife and child; Charles and William were in the Upper Military College at Farnham. Henry came home for part of a summer, which was bad for his career in the Navy but good for his mother. Richard, who had deserted the ministry for the law, married in 1817 the widow of Captain Staples R.N., and Sarah found herself deeply attached to her new daughter-in-law, whom she had seen often at Castletown.

So the months passed in visits to and from her children, and in reunions and correspondence with Susan. All around her, old allegiances were vanishing and new ones were taking their place. Grandchildren were arriving in profusion, and old friends were disappearing. Mr. O'Brien had died in 1815, and Sarah to her great vexation had been too ill with erysipelas to go to her broken-hearted Susan. "I am a mere log," she had fumed, "incapable of helping anybody." Another lifelong tie had been snapped in January, 1816, when her faithful maid, Susan Frost, who had been loyal to her in the days of her disgrace, and who had singlehandedly beaten off the Peep o' Day Boys at Castletown, "fell ill of old age" and died. All this was enough, and more than enough, to fill

the thoughts of an old woman, suffering now from a delay in remembering that caused a continual confusion in her head.

She suffered from a severe illness in the winter of 1819, but recovered sufficiently to undertake the tedious journey to Ireland, there to enjoy for several months the company of her beloved Louisa Conolly at Castletown. After that her health steadily declined, though at times her dying vitality flared up briefly and her intimates could still trace the lineaments of her renowned charm. On one of these increasingly rare days, young Henry Edward Fox rode with his father to call on Lady Sarah Napier and found her "perfectly clear-headed and cheerful; her language very well chosen and her quickness and wit very remarkable for one of her age and infirmities."

When Susan O'Brien got a last glimpse of Sarah in 1825, she had entered her eightieth year, and it was plain that the end was near. Yet even as she sat blind and silent, in the midst of her children and grandchildren, the secret rooms of her memory may well have been peopled with figures more vivid than the family circle that clustered around her: Young Charles Napier brandishing his wooden bayonet at the head of the school-boy volunteers; the good Donny seated by the fire at Celbridge or towering above his brother officers in the tiny recruiting office in Southampton; Edward Fitzgerald dancing with Pamela beneath the Cipriani frescoes at Castletown; little Louisa Bunbury languishing in the damp rooms of Stretton; Gordon with his fierce, moody eyes and long, reddish-brown hair; the dancers sweeping down the blue damask room at Almack's; little Lauzun hopping about in the candlelight at Barton; Charles Bunbury bringing to her fresh youth the weariness of a *roué*; the King edging the royal chair, heavy as it was, to the dancers' bench on which she sat; Mr. Fox tutoring her on what to say when she next went to Court; Charles James Fox and Susan declaiming for Dr. Francis; the afternoon parade along the North Country Road

near Dublin; and the blue china jar and the old musical clock at Kensington; and the pretty glass bird cage in her mother's bedroom.

But of all this she said nothing. She slipped peacefully into death on August twenty-sixth, 1826. Spiritually, she had been out of the world for a long time, or surely she would have found something spontaneous and arresting to say about approaching death.

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## Index

### A

- Addison, Joseph, 42  
 Ailesbury, Lady, 217-18  
 "Ajax." *See* Erroll, Earl of  
 Albemarle, Earl and Countess of, 24, 59, 247  
 Amelia, Princess, 48-49, 217  
 American Revolution, 245-48, 255  
 Ancram, Lord, 62  
 Anne, Queen of England, 14  
 Aubigny, Dukedom of, 8, 19, 23  
 Augusta, Princess, 86, 96, 98, 141

### B

- Barrington, Lady, 84  
 Barton, 212-13  
 Bathurst, Lady, 304  
 Beaufort, Duke of, 2, 5, 62, 161  
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, 299, 311, 316  
 Boyle, Henry, 28  
 Brudenell family, 14, 15  
 Brunswick, Princess of, 72, 73  
 Buckingham, Duke of, 5, 6, 15  
 Bunbury, Louisa, 214-16, 223, 230-33, 239, 244, 249-52, 259-60, 262-65, 309; death, 269  
 Bunbury, Sir Thomas Charles (Charles), 127-30, 132-34, 144, 161, 162, 167, 183-84, 191-92, 214, 254-55, 330; engagement to Lady Sarah, 132; marriage, 136; character, 138-41; illness, 198; divorce from Lady Sarah, 221-22, 237-40; settlement on Lady Sarah, 239; last meeting with Lady Sarah, 248-49

- Bunbury, Mrs. Thomas Charles. *See* Lennox, Lady Sarah  
 Bunbury, Sir William, 130, 134, 137-38, 154  
 Burnet, Bishop, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12  
 Bury Saint Edmunds Fair, 138-39  
 Bute, Marquis of, 52-53, 59, 63, 71-72, 88, 93, 100, 102, 117, 123, 141-42, 146; and the Dowager Princess of Wales, 63-65; and George III, 64-65, 90-93; letters from George III, 89-93  
 Byron, Lord, 210, 230

### C

- Cadogan, Earl of, 16, 24, 37  
 Cadogan, Lady Sarah. *See* Richmond, Duchess of (second)  
 Calendar, new, 81  
 Cambis, Mme. de, 170-73, 176  
 Camden, Lord, 284-86, 293  
 "Carbonic paper," 314  
 Cardigan, Earl of, 15  
 Carhampton, Lord, 287  
 Carlisle, Earl of, 153-54, 166, 168, 180, 182-85, 192, 200-01, 203, 204, 211-14, 264; friendship with Lady Sarah, 196-97  
 Castletown, 270, 272, 287-89, 295, 296, 323  
 Celbridge, 303, 305  
 Charles II, King of England, 1, 2-13, 34  
 Charlotte, Queen of England, 88, 93, 97, 306; description of, 99-100, 118; wedding and coronation, 104-

24; arrival in England, 107; comparison with Lady Sarah, 113  
 Chartres, Duc de, 169, 181  
 Chesterfield, Lord, 157  
 Choiseul, Duc de, 174, 176-77  
 Clare, Lord, 292  
 Cleveland, Duchess of, 5, 6  
 Coigny, Chevalier de, 182  
 Coke, Lady Mary, 211, 216-18, 225, 227-28, 231-32, 234  
 Conolly, Lady Louisa (Mrs. Thomas Conolly), 24-27, 32, 33, 156-59, 235-36, 260, 261, 263, 268-71, 278, 288-89, 302, 323, 334  
 Conolly, Thomas, 32, 285, 297, 300, 308  
 Conti, Prince de, 160, 170, 172, 178, 183, 185, 186  
 Conway, Henry, 266  
 Cornwallis, Lord, 297-99  
 Cumberland, Duke of, 56, 58, 59, 161, 162

## D

Darnley, Earldom of, 8  
 Defeat of the English fleet, 247  
 Deffand, Mme. du, 169, 170, 175, 177-78, 181, 183, 186-88, 211, 213, 219  
 Delany, Mrs., 27, 32-33  
 Divorce proceedings in England, 221-22, 238  
 Dorset, Duke of, 210  
 Dryden, John, 10  
 Dublin society, 28, 30-33

## E

Erroll, Earl of, 120, 121, 125-26  
 Evelyn, John, 1, 7, 10, 11, 35

## F

Fair at Bury Saint Edmunds, 138-39  
 Fitzgerald, Lady Edward (Pamela), 276, 285, 286, 290-94  
 Fitzgerald, Lord Edward, 27, 272, 273, 276-77; *Pamela and Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, 285; part in Irish rebellion, 285-86, 290-94; arrest, and death, 293-94

Fitzgerald, Lady Lucy Anne, 290-91  
 Fitzgerald, Lady Sophia, 273  
 Fitz-James, Duke of, 161  
 Fitzwilliam, Lord, 284  
 Fox, Lady Carolina Georgina. *See* Fox, Mrs. Henry  
 Fox, Charles James, 39, 42, 45, 55-57, 69, 126-27, 131, 143-44, 147, 154, 156, 158, 159, 165, 166, 197, 203, 232, 234, 266-68, 276, 301, 312; scandal over Lady Sarah, 233-34; career, 268; death, 308-09  
 Fox, Mrs. Charles James, 309, 330-31  
 Fox, Henry (later Lord Holland), 24, 25, 34-41, 44-46, 50-51, 54, 56-63, 66-69, 71-76, 79-82, 84-88, 92-94, 97, 102, 104, 123, 124, 129, 130, 133, 134, 136, 141-42, 145-47, 151-52, 156, 161, 162, 165, 166, 214, 216; ode to Lady Sarah, 197-98; death, 234  
 Fox, Mrs. Henry (Lady Carolina Georgina Lennox), 17, 25, 33, 34-39, 59, 104-06, 142, 144, 156, 157, 159; death, 234  
 Fox, Henry Edward, 334  
 Fox, Stephen (first), 34-35  
 Fox, Stephen (second). *See* Ilchester, Earl of  
 Fox, Stephen (third), 38, 39, 69, 156, 158, 165, 166  
 Fox-Strangways, Stephen. *See* Ilchester, Earl of  
 Fox-Strangways, Lady Susan (Mrs. William O'Brien), 35, 39-41, 44-46, 54, 57, 59-61, 67-69, 79, 83, 84, 86, 92, 96, 100, 104-06, 125, 127, 129, 131, 132, 137, 143, 145, 147, 155, 162, 164, 166, 201, 205, 212, 254, 257, 261-63, 267, 271, 283, 295, 301-02, 305-08, 310, 332-34; letter from Lady Susan on jilting by George III, 94-96; marriage to William O'Brien, 147-53; return to England, 234-35  
 Francis, Doctor, 185  
 Francis, Sir Philip, 135  
 Frederick, Prince of Wales, 52, 56

French Revolution, 276, 277, 285  
 Frost, Susan, 278, 287-88, 333

## G

Garrick, David, 147, 158  
 George II, King of England, 19, 21-23, 47-49, 58, 59, 64; first meeting with Lady Sarah, 21-23; second meeting, 47-49; death, 51  
 George III, King of England, 49-52, 53-58, 70, 161, 238, 246-47, 297, 301, 304, 306, 308, 310; courtship of Lady Sarah, 49-62, 65-66, 70-103; and Lord Bute, 64-65; birthday ball, 78-80; engagement to Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, 88, 93; *Letters to Lord Bute*, 89-93; opinion on Lady Sarah, 90-91; coronation and wedding, 97, 98, 104-24; speculations on intentions toward Lady Sarah, 100-02; in love with Lady Sarah, 123-24; receives Lady Sarah at court, 142-43; blindness and insanity, 305, 332  
 George IV, King of England, 142, 143, 264  
 Gloucester, Duke of, 98, 332  
 Gontaut, Duc de, 174, 177  
 Goodwood, 35-37  
 Gordon, Cosmo, 234  
 Gordon, Lord George, 209, 210, 253  
 Gordon, Lord William, 252-53, 330-31; love affair with Lady Sarah, 208, 209-26; departure from England, 230-31  
 Gramont, Duchesse de, 174  
 Granby, Marquis of, 161  
 Grenville, George, 161, 162  
 Gwynn, Nell, 7

## H

Halnaker, 241-44  
 Hanmer, Sir Thomas Charles, 130  
 Hardwicke, Lord, 58  
 Hardy, Admiral Sir Charles, 249  
 Hawkesbury, Lord, 306-07  
 Henrietta, Duchesse d'Orleans, 2-6  
 Henry VIII, King of England, 238

Holland, Earl of (Sir Henry Rich), 41-42  
 Holland, Lady. *See* Fox, Mrs. Henry  
 Holland, Lord (first). *See* Fox, Henry  
 Holland, Lord (second), 314  
 Holland House, 34, 40, 41-43, 55

## I

Ilchester, Earl of (Stephen Fox-Strangways), and Countess, 35, 37, 39, 68, 69, 106, 148, 149, 163, 305  
 Illegitimacy in eighteenth-century English society, 214  
 Ireland, 246-47, 274-76; disturbances in, 284-97; Act of Union with England, 299

## J

James II, King of England (formerly Duke of York), 1, 12, 13, 54  
 Jesse, John Heneage, 100  
 Johnson, Samuel, 122-23  
 "Junius," 135

## K

Kelly, 318-19  
 Keppel, Admiral Viscount, 247  
 Kildare, Marquis of. *See* Leinster, Duke of (first)  
 Kildare House. *See* Leinster House

## L

Lansdowne, Lord, 27  
 Lauzun, Duc de, and love affair with Lady Sarah, 170-95; *Memoirs*, 195; visit to Lady Sarah, 233-34; publication of *Memoirs*, naming Lady Sarah, 331  
 Lee, Major General Charles, 189  
 Leinster, Duke of (first; formerly Earl and Marquis of Kildare), and Duchess, 24-34, 37, 39, 56, 162, 164, 260, 272, 324  
 Leinster, Duke of (second), 276, 285, 290  
 Leinster House (formerly Kildare House), 28-29  
 Lennox, Duke of, 8-9

Lennox, Lady Carolina Georgina.

See Fox, Mrs. Henry

Lennox, Lady Cecilia, 26, 227

Lennox, Charles. See Richmond, Duke of (first)

Lennox, Lady Emily. See Leinster, Duke of, and Duchess (second)

Lennox, Lord and Lady George Henry, 62, 63, 68, 72, 75, 247-48, 260, 300, 302, 308

Lennox, Lady Louisa. See Conolly, Mrs. Thomas

Lennox, Lady Sarah (later Lady Bunbury; Mrs. George Napier), brothers and sisters, 20; birth, 21; meeting with George II, 21-23, 47-49; at Holland House, 25-26; life in Dublin, 26-34; return to England, 34; at Holland House, 34, 40; best friend, Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, 35; as an actress, 55-56, 57; beauty, 57-58, 78-79, 117; courtship by George III, 49-62, 65-66, 70-103; courtship by Lord Newbottle, 62-71; fracture of leg, 68-70; in the hayfield, 82-83; not in love with George III, 85; opinion of, by George III, 90-91; letter to Lady Susan Fox-Strangways on jilting by George III, 94-96; snubbing of the King, 98; bridesmaid at the wedding of the King and Princess Charlotte, 104-07; comparison with Queen Charlotte, 113; at the coronation, 122; loved by George III, 123-24; belle of London, 125-36; courtship by Lord Erroll, 125-26; courtship by Thomas Charles Bunbury, 127-30; engagement to Bunbury, 132; marriage, 135-36; as a bride, 137-55; at court; received by the King, 142-43; and the marriage of Lady Susan, 149-51; disillusionment, 154-55; in Paris in the Spring, 156-67; as actress and critic; desire for children, 158; kissed by King of France, 159; ill and neglected at Barton, 164-65; in France; mis-

tress of Lauzun, 168-95; in England, 188; at Barton, 189; proposes elopement to Lauzun, 191; break with Lauzun, 193-95; friendship with the Earl of Carlisle, 196-97; life at Spa; return to London, 198-202; indiscretions; amours, 203-08; lonesomeness, 205, 259; affair with Lord William Gordon, 208-26; lovers, 210-11, 224-25; *Life and Letters*, 211; pregnancy, and birth of daughter Louisa, 212-15; elopement with Gordon, 215-16; divorced by Bunbury, 221-22, 237-40; separation from Gordon, 226; declassée, 227-40; "letter" to husband, 228-29; penance, 231-32; visit by Lauzun, 233-34; scandal over Charles James Fox, 233-34; at Castletown with the Conollys, 235-37; at Goodwood, 237; settlement on her, by Bunbury, 239; life at Hahnaker, 241-44; recovery, 241-56; advocacy of American cause, 245-46; last meetings with Bunbury, 248-49; remarriage to Bunbury suggested, 254-55; marriage to Colonel George Napier, 255-64; finances, 261, 262, 303-05, 307-08; children by Napier, 265, 267, 270-73, 277, 282, 299, 301 (*see also* names, under "Napier"); joins husband with army, 278, 280-83; in Dublin, 298-99; blindness, 299, 300, 305, 310, 314, 322; widowed, 302; in London; at Castletown, 304-05; pension, 303-05, 307-08; mother of heroes, 311-27; refusal to believe report of son's death, 317-18; reunion with son, 319; praised by sons, 322-24; closing years, 328-35; tribute by daughter-in-law; Lady Sarah on her children, 329-30; view on adherence to right, 331; reminiscences of George III, 332-33; death, 335

Lennox lands, 8

*Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, 211

- Lightfoot, Hannah, 54  
 Louis XIV, King of France, 2, 4, 6,  
 8, 11  
 Louis XV, King of France, 159  
 Louis XVI, King of France, 277

## M

- Madame. *See* Henrietta, Duchesse  
 d'Orleans  
 March, Earldom of, 8, 15, 17  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 37  
*Memoirs of the Duc de Lauzun*, 195  
 Methuen of Tarbolton, Barony of,  
 8  
 Moira, Lord, 281, 283  
 Monsieur. *See* Orleans, Duc d'  
 Montespan, Mme. de, 3  
 Morris, General Staats Long, 209-10  
 Moore, General Sir John, 304, 309,  
 311, 313; death, 316

## N

- Napier, Caroline Henrietta, 273;  
 death, 320-21  
 Napier, Cecilia, 277, 309-10; death,  
 313  
 Napier, General Sir Charles James,  
 278, 287, 296, 299, 304, 308, 309,  
 311-14, 320-23, 325, 326, 328,  
 333; birth, 265; report of death,  
 316-17; recovery from wounds;  
 saved by fellow Mason, 318-19  
 Napier, Emily Louisa, 267-69, 283  
 Napier, Colonel George, 244-45,  
 247; death of first wife; proposal  
 to Lady Sarah; engagement and  
 marriage, 255-64; superintendent  
 of Woolwich Laboratory, 262,  
 265-66; rejoins the Army, 277-79;  
 Comptroller of Army Accounts,  
 297-98; illness and death, 300-02  
 Napier, George Thomas, 267, 287,  
 299, 303, 304, 308, 309, 311, 313,  
 316, 317, 319, 320-27, 333; mar-  
 riage, 328-29  
 Napier, Henry Edward, 102, 272,  
 301, 303, 309, 324, 328, 333; on  
 Lady Sarah and King George III,  
 49, 101  
 Napier, Louisa, 320-21, 324  
 Napier, Richard, 271, 301, 305, 308,  
 313, 320, 324; invention of "car-  
 bonic paper," 314; marriage, 333  
 Napier, William Francis Patrick, 270,  
 296, 299, 308, 309, 311-17, 319,  
 320, 322-25, 333; marriage, 328  
 Napoleon I, 299, 311, 316  
 Newbottle, Lord, 62-71, 75, 80, 115,  
 130-31; courtship of Lady Sarah,  
 65-71  
 Newcastle, Duke of, 24, 53, 58, 135  
 Newmarket, races at, 138  
 "No-Popery Riots," 209, 253  
 North, Lord, 233, 245  
 Northumberland, Lord, 161

## O

- Oates, Titus, 9  
 O'Brien, William, 284, 301; mar-  
 riage to Lady Susan Fox-Strang-  
 ways, 147-53; death, 333  
 O'Brien, Mrs. William (Lady Susan  
 Fox-Strangways). *See* Fox-Strang-  
 ways, Lady Susan  
 O'Connor, Arthur, 286, 290, 291  
 Ode on Lady Susan, by Lord Hol-  
 land, 197-98  
 Offaly, Lord, 57, 164  
 Opie, Mrs. Amelia, on Lady Sarah,  
 325  
 Orange, Prince of (later William  
 III, King of England), 14  
 Orford, Lord, 154  
 Orleans, Henrietta, Duchesse d', 2-6  
 Orleans, Duc d', 2, 3, 4, 6

## P

- Pamela. *See* Fitzgerald, Lady Ed-  
 ward  
*Pamela and Lord Edward Fitzger-  
 ald*, 285  
 Peninsular campaigns, 311, 313-14,  
 320, 321, 325  
 Pitt, William (the elder), 35, 53,  
 58, 141-42  
 Pitt, William (the younger), 275,  
 277, 304-08  
 "Popish Plot," 9  
 Pompadour, Mme. de, 175

Portsmouth, Duchess of (Louise de Querouaille), 1-15, 17-19  
Powell (actor), 206

## Q

Querouaille, Louise de (Duchess of Portsmouth), 1-15, 17-19

## R

Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 26, 57, 126  
Rich, Sir Henry (Earl of Holland), 41-42  
Richmond, Duchess of (second; mother of Lady Sarah), 16, 19-20, 24-26; children, 20  
Richmond, Duke of (first; grandfather of Lady Sarah), 7-8, 11, 13-16, 25; death, 24  
Richmond, Duke of (second; father of Lady Sarah), 15-20, 23-24, 34-36, 38, 46, 151  
Richmond, Duke of (third, brother of Lady Sarah), 67, 70, 134, 144, 158, 163, 192, 193, 217, 218, 226, 227, 238, 239, 241, 242, 256, 257, 259-62, 264, 266, 267, 299-300, 303; death, 308  
Richmond, Duke of (fourth, nephew of Lady Sarah), 158, 323  
Richmond and Lennox, Duke of, 8  
Rockingham, Marquis of, 163  
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 27  
Russell, Lady Caroline, 62

## S

Selwyn, George, 118, 168-69, 197-200, 203-05, 211-15, 264  
Settrington, Barony of, 8  
Sévigné, Mme. de, 7, 9  
Sheridan, Thomas, 32  
Shrewsbury, Countess of, 15  
Sophia Charlotte, Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. *See* Charlotte, Queen  
Spain, war in, 311, 313-14, 320-21, 325  
Spain and the Spanish, 315-16  
Stainville, Mme. de, 174-77  
Stanhope, Lady Hester, 306-08  
Stone, Archbishop George, 28

Stuart, Lady Louisa, 100-01  
Swale, John, 221-22  
Swift, Dean, 14

## T

Thackeray, William Makepeace, 51, 55  
Tomatis, Mme. de, 199-200  
Trevelyan, Sir George Otto, 94

## U

United Irishmen, 275, 284, 286, 288, 290, 291

## V

Vallière, Duchesse de la, 160  
Villiers, Lord, 145-46

## W

Wales, Prince of (Frederick), 52, 56  
Wales, Prince of. *See* George III  
Wales, Prince of (later George IV), 142, 143, 264  
Wales, Dowager Princess of, 48, 51, 52, 58, 71-72, 82, 108; and Lord Bute, 63-65  
Walpole, Horace, 19-20, 27, 30, 37, 44, 51, 57, 78, 99, 108-10, 114, 117, 118, 120, 122, 123, 126, 132, 160, 181, 183, 186, 188, 197, 213, 219, 234, 264; on King George III and Lady Sarah, 101-02  
Walpole, Sir Robert, 35  
War with France, 274-75, 277  
Wellington, Duke of (formerly Sir Arthur Wellesley), 278-79, 313, 320, 324, 325, 327  
Westmoreland, Lord, 118, 119, 284, 286  
Weymouth, Lord, 162  
William III, King of England, 14  
Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury, 37

## Y

York, Duke of (later James II), 1, 12, 13, 54  
York, Duke of (son of George III), 286







